

ENGLISH STUDIES

2014

1949



Being Volume Two of the New Series of
ESSAYS AND STUDIES

Collected for the English Association by

R PHILIP MAGNUS, Bt.

824.08
M34E

TO THE READER

KINDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.



Class No. 824.08

Book No. M39E

Acc. No. 9737 ✓ 85



ENGLISH STUDIES 1949

Com 08
AI-93
253

ENGLISH STUDIES 1949''

BEING VOLUME TWO OF THE NEW SERIES
OF ESSAYS AND STUDIES COLLECTED FOR
THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION
BY SIR PHILIP MAGNUS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

First Edition . . . 1949

A-S-cell
acc w 9737

824.08
M.39 E

Cal

June
8-12-58

Printed in Great Britain by
Wyman & Sons, Ltd., London, Fakenham and Reading

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. HIT OR MISS	I
<i>Hugh Lyon</i>	
II. BEN JONSON AND THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	7
<i>L. J. Potts</i>	
III. THE CHARACTER AND PRIVATE LIFE OF EDMUND BURKE	25
<i>Sir Philip Magnus</i>	
IV. THE PROSE OF E. R. EDDISON	43
<i>G. Rostrevor Hamilton</i>	
V. PALGRAVE'S "GOLDEN TREASURY"	54
<i>Colin J. Horne</i>	
VI. YOU MIGHT HAVE RIMED	64
<i>E. H. W. Meyerstein</i>	
VII. COLERIDGE'S THEORY OF THE IMAGINATION	75
<i>R. L. Brett</i>	

I

HIT OR MISS

by HUGH LYON

I ORIGINALLY planned to head this article "Trial and Error", but decided that the assumption underlying even that unflattering title (that the goal is sooner or later attained, however devious the route) was in this instance unjustified; for the sub-title, which I retain, is "The Confessions of a Pedagogue", and when one has got as far as the confessional it is as well to be honest and go through with it.

One of the distinctive features of any career which deals primarily with persons and not things is that assurance dwindles rather than increases with experience. There are spheres where long service brings justified confidence, where the growth of knowledge is not an illusion, where mastery of one's subject is measurable and unquestioned. But ask any doctor, any clergyman, any schoolmaster, when he reaches the end of his career, how far he has in his life's work learnt to understand human beings, and his answer (if he is both wise and honest) will amount to little more than a confession of failure. The undoubted fact that many men in these professions are accounted successful is a tribute to their personality and the generosity of their critics; yet there is not one who does not carry with him into his retirement the unhappy memory of wrong decisions and unsolved problems.

Yet there is also not one of them, probably, who would if he had the chance choose any other profession, even though he might have reason to believe that his talents in the world of industry or commerce would bring him not only greater material rewards but a refreshing sense of achievement. It is partly, of course, because a life spent in the study and companionship and service of other people is in itself an all-sufficing recompense; partly too for another reason which will appear in due course, and which goes far to outweigh any sense of inadequacy. There are also of course special considerations which apply to the ministry and the calling of medicine; with these I am not concerned here. All I

can say with confidence is that at the end of twenty-seven years' schoolmastering I am rather less certain that I know all the answers than I was when I started; and that in spite of this I cannot imagine any career I would rather have chosen.

Both these feelings have their roots in the bewildering but fascinating uncertainty of human conduct. There are no hard and fast rules for dealing with human beings, though the psychologist believes that there are if only he could discover them, and Colonel Blimp not only knows there are, but has acted happily on them all his life. In all human relationships we are guided by something much less tangible and predictable than precedents and statistics, and inspired by motives which can hardly ever be related directly to principles (though we seldom realise or admit this); the whole field of our activity is as obscure as, or (if possible) more obscure than that of economics. And when the persons with whom we are concerned are not only human but adolescent, both the bewilderment and the fascination are immeasurably increased; for we are dealing with individuals who are not only different from all other individuals, but different also from what they themselves were a year ago and will be a year hence; and we are concerned with just those years in which mistaken suggestions or unwise treatment, which the formed character would resist or reject, may be disastrously effective. We may, if we are sensitive, be haunted by this knowledge, and I have suggested that it does come to haunt us more and more. Yet we are such born meddlers, and so convinced (may the Lord pity us!) that we have "green fingers" of the spirit to give help and guidance in these difficult years, that we suppress our uncertainties, fortify ourselves with generalizations and go gaily ahead.

This attitude is all the more fatally easy to the schoolmaster because he is, whether he likes it or not, placed from the first in an unnatural situation. For much of his working life he is the only adult in a group of children, and even among adults his cap and gown suggest authority, as the soldier's uniform speaks of courage, the policeman's of security. If he is not careful, he will begin to see himself as his pupils (poor innocents) see him, or more probably (and less innocently) pretend to see him. Infallible to them, he will begin to discover that quality in himself; the last court of appeal in the classroom on matters of fact or judgment, he will, like Cromwell's opponents, come to ignore the possibility of his being mistaken. Should he prevail on certain other adults to ignore it also, and so become a headmaster, obviously the dangers are hideously multiplied. It is now more than ever difficult for him to confess any

doubts he may come to entertain, to show any appreciation of a contrary point of view. He must at all costs be firm, decided, unwavering, for these qualities make for stability and respect for authority, which are the basis of good government; hesitation, for whatever cause, becomes a weakness, severity a safer course than clemency. "A beast, but a just beast", yes; and if the poor beast sees a little too clearly and begins to have qualms as to whether he really has been so just after all, that becomes a matter for unhappy meditation in the night-watches; but let him not confess his misgivings, or all is lost.

This is, perhaps, a caricature, or at the best a simplification, of the normal teacher's attitude. But most experienced schoolmasters will confess to these tendencies in themselves, and perhaps observe here and there among their colleagues the finished article. After all, what is the alternative? If we take the teaching side of the job alone, how can any progress be made unless we proceed on certain general assumptions? Where the private tutor can fit his practice to the demands of the individual case, varying his speed, method of presentation and choice of stimulus to suit his pupil, the class-teacher must take that course which best suits the majority. He soon comes to accept and indeed to profit from this limitation, and to build up a technique based on the experience of normal reactions. The greater his success, the more ready he becomes to speak of "boys" in the lump; "boys" can only be taught—or disciplined, or interested—in this way or that. So far, so good, perhaps, so long as he does not go on to make the unconscious assumption that because individual differences cannot be taken into account they have accordingly ceased to exist. But how many of us can claim that we never have made this assumption, never thought of the group rather than the individual, never regarded with suspicion any deviation from the normal? "If a boy can't see this after I have explained it, then he must be either idle or a fool, or more probably both." It may be so; after all in our experience the great majority of boys *have* seen it, provided they put their minds to it. But there are other possibilities, and are we quite certain it is right to ignore them? The boy may have a "blind spot" in our subject, he may be growing so fast that he tires easily, he may be racked with anxiety by some news from home, he may be sickening for measles or bullied in his dormitory. Naturally we cannot explore every inadequacy, but we should at least realize that any judgments we make are purely tentative.

But what is excusable and perhaps essential on the teaching side of our profession is more open to criticism when we are dealing with

matters of discipline or ethics. Yet it is, paradoxically, just in this department of school life that the emphasis is, right or wrongly, laid on decided judgment and decisive action. It is therefore only too easy for the teacher who is called upon to be judge or executant to extend his habit of generalization to a field where he feels in special need of rules to guide him and precedents to follow or avoid. We are perhaps emerging from the era of routine punishments for routine offences, a system which ignores the fact that no two offences and no two offenders are ever exactly alike. I remember a colleague of mine telling me how, on going on a Sunday evening to see his Headmaster at the school where he served his apprenticeship, he found a group of boys waiting outside the study. Sheepish answers to his enquiry revealed that these boys had all been bottom of their form the previous week and were queuing up for the beating which was weekly administered (on Sunday evening!) to those guilty of this crime. That was thirty years ago, and even then—one hopes—a survival from an unenlightened past. Yet in less crude ways the same principle is at work; and there are scores of distinguished headmasters and housemasters who would still be prepared to declare that certain offences must invariably be dealt with in certain ways. It is easy to dismiss this attitude with contempt (as I may seem to have done) as obscurantist and out-of-date. But it is not quite so simple as that. For the difficulty which confronts the schoolmaster more urgently than it does anyone whose judgments are exercised in a less restricted field is that of being just to the individual without doing harm to the community. Where the two aims are, or seem to be, in conflict, then the welfare of the school must come first. If an offence goes unpunished, or is visited with punishment lighter or less obvious than is customary, then public opinion, which always lags behind the enlightened conscience, will assume either that the offence is no longer regarded with disfavour, or that there is a weakening of control in high places; and this may lead to more serious consequences than an act of injustice to an individual. Sometimes the culprit is prepared to accept this view himself; and more than one of those who have suffered at my hands has agreed (with a rueful smile) that, though both he and I know that the offence has been fully atoned for by remorse and—if need be—restitution, public opinion must have its due satisfaction. But such compliance does not pacify the indignant voice of conscience; nor can any sensitive man be satisfied with such a solution.

The problem can accordingly be worrying enough even in a clear case of acknowledged guilt and a contrite and co-operative culprit.

But anyone who has had to exercise authority in a school knows that this is child's play to the perplexities which are continually demanding solution. Consider what is in effect the situation in any House at any boarding school. Here are forty or fifty boys, of the age range 13 to 18 (possibly the most unstable and bewildering five years in the lives of most of us), each one essentially different, with the differences accentuated by home treatment and environment; not one of these boys is in all respects "normal" or "average" (if those words really have any meaning outside the physical world). Some are disgusted by what may delight a few and be accepted indifferently by the majority; the emotions aroused in them by such words as "home", "love", "patriotism", "honour", will vary from fervid affection or enthusiasm to boredom or cynical distaste. Even the emotions they reveal may come from quite different sources; reserve may be shyness and modesty or self-centredness and pride; officiousness may be mere toadying or a mistaken desire to help; self-assertion may be conceit or the defensive mechanism of an inferiority complex. Moreover all these individuals are in isolation infuriatingly different from what they can become when acting as a group of 50 or 10 or even of 3 or 4. They are capable of mass enthusiasms or mass cruelties and follies, of all of which most of them may repent in private. Nor, as I have stated above, is this all; for if some superhuman Wisdom were to understand them fully, every one of them, as they were yesterday, they are already changing and may react quite differently to-morrow.

But no headmaster or housemaster is the personification of wisdom; and, besides his imperfect understanding, he has to deal with the other limitations in himself which stand in the way of objective judgment. He may have too great a weakness for the charming and the friendly, or too great a distrust of them. He may dislike extroverts, or admire athletes. He may be too simple or too subtle, too set or too fluid in his estimates. He may be fundamentally conceited and favour those with temperaments like his own; or he may be over-modest and suspect them of having all his own faults. Or he may be so aware of all these pitfalls that he determines righteously to be no respecter of persons; and so make the greatest mistake of all, since it is on his power to understand persons that he will stand or fall.

It is not surprising that the more deeply we consider our responsibilities the more fervently we are tempted to cry with the apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" To that question there is only one answer, as St. Paul himself tells us. Yet it is dangerous to claim that

“our sufficiency is of God”, unless we are quite clear in our own minds what that means. Our separate judgments and actions are what they are, faulty, inadequate, often wholly wrong; no compensating divine action is going to make any change there. To my mind the consolation of those words lies in a feature of the whole situation of which I have said nothing, something which I had in mind when I spoke at the beginning of this article of a reason for our choice of profession which went far to outweigh our sense of inadequacy.

It is surely a fact that, while to the outsider the important things about the life of any community are the more resounding actions and the more weighty judgments and decisions, the real influences are much less easily traced or observed. The compelling word or drastic action, these are for the moment effective, but their permanent influence depends entirely on whether they are said or done for effect or spring naturally out of character. For the real influence a teacher or headmaster exercises on those under him is not built up out of a series of incidents, however dramatic, but is spread, for the most part unconsciously, by his essential personality. It is what we *are* that matters, not what we may do or say; and this can be a very sobering thought, for it is a death-blow to all our little pretences and well-meaning hypocrisies. But it can be a cheering thought too. Most of our errors are defects of mind, not of heart, and the young have a heaven-sent faculty for rejecting and recovering from the bad effects of acts or words which they know to be well-intentioned. If we are sincere, they will forgive our shortcomings; and that forgiveness is a receptive attitude, which makes them ready to accept such good influences as come their way. But it is not only on the generosity of our pupils that we rely, but on something much more fundamental, on that “sufficiency of God” which upheld Paul, not merely, or mainly, in all his sufferings and conflicts, but in his profound sense of his own unworthiness. “Remember, O Lord, what Thou hast wrought in us and not what we deserve; and, as Thou hast called us to Thy service, make us worthy of our calling.”

So perhaps my title was too despondent after all. However few our hits and numerous our misses, our aim at least—if indeed we were following our vocation—was true enough. It is no fatal error to be ignorant in a field where no one has yet come to full knowledge; only let us be aware of our ignorance and not ashamed to admit it. And then, though we may bungle our planting and our watering, God will yet give the increase.

II

BEN JONSON AND THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

by L. J. POTTS

JONSON's celebrated judgment of Shakespeare that he was not of an age but for all time throws an indirect light on Jonson himself. Some great writers, like Chaucer and Shakespeare, seem to adapt themselves as age succeeds age and the world moves further and further from the political, social, and intellectual habits of their lives and those of their contemporaries. But there are others, like Langland and Spenser, who belong to an age. I do not mean that they have ceased to be of literary importance and become no more than subjects of academic study; their lasting power can still be felt, but it requires an effort of historical imagination. The well-known description of Spenser as the poets' poet recognizes that he is not only a great artist, but a remote one. Nobody calls Chaucer a poets' poet, though poets have as much or more to learn from him; but Langland might be so called.

Of all our great writers, Ben Jonson more than any other is in the second category. There is a barrier between him and us. He has been singularly fortunate in the treatment he has received from critics and scholars, not least in the present century. His reputation all through the neo-classic period was high: yet it survived into the next age without a break. Coleridge spoke of his "intense and burning art", and had no doubt that he "was the greatest man after Shakespeare in that age of dramatic genius". A century later Mr. T. S. Eliot wrote: "Of all the dramatists of his time, Jonson is probably the one whom the present age would find the most sympathetic, if it knew him." And now, to help us to know him, we have the great Herford and Simpson edition. Yet, from the time of Dryden, the barrier has been there. To Dryden, Jonson was of the giant race *before the flood*. A phrase of Coleridge's is significant: "*those who are learned and curious enough to follow the steps of this robust, surly, and observing dramatist.*" Mr. Eliot qualified his judgment of the value of Jonson to the twentieth century by the important condition, "*if it knew him.*"

A part of this barrier is built on a simple misunderstanding: people think of Jonson as an Elizabethan and compare him, unfavourably, with Shakespeare. This is not a new habit; it goes back to the seventeenth century, and probably to their lifetimes. To Dryden, who was in no doubt about Jonson's importance, they were the two unquestioned kings of the giant race, and he was conscious of a certain boldness in preferring Shakespeare; he admired Jonson and loved Shakespeare. Shakespeare has kept the love of his countrymen, and long since stolen their admiration from Jonson. This is not altogether just: for the two great dramatists do not compete. True, they both belong to the transition from the Elizabethan to the Jacobean age; but Shakespeare was born in the same year as Marlowe, and Jonson nine years later, in the same year as Donne. A decade may seem a small interval after three or four hundred years, but it suffices to place Shakespeare at one end of the bridge and Jonson at the other; a few years can make a great difference in a period of rapid development. There is a deep gulf between anyone born before 1900 and anyone born after 1910. The Edwardian and later writers who have known both worlds bear ample evidence to that gulf: Mr. Forster and Mr. Sassoon, for example. There is at least as deep a gulf between Shakespeare and Jonson. So Shakespeare remains the greatest of the Elizabethans, and Jonson the greatest of the Jacobeans. His nearest rival, Donne, upon the whole looked back; Jonson never hesitated to look forward. To the one the new philosophy was an earthquake; to the other it was the foundation and text-book of his thought and art.

But, as Jonson's latest editors recognize, there is a strong link between these two poets. Of course, what is commonly remembered against Jonson is his censure: that "Donne for not keeping of accent deserved hanging", and that "for not being understood 'he' would perish". But these are only two of many references to Donne in the *Conversations*, including the judgment that he was "the first poet *in the world* in some things"; and whatever Jonson may have said to Drummond, who must surely have drawn him on with naïve or ironical malice to make so many cutting remarks about his fellow-writers as well as some extremely tactful ones about Drummond himself, there is nothing ungracious in the two epigrams to Donne,

"Donne, the delight of Phoebus and each Muse. . . ."

and

“Who shall doubt, Donne, whe’r I a Poet be,
When I dare send my Epigrams to thee?”

But their strangest link is the Elegy “To make the doubt clear that no woman’s true”, which appears both in the 1633 edition of Donne’s poems and in *Underwood*, both of which were published posthumously. Herford and Simpson solve the puzzle by withdrawing it from Jonson, together with three other fine elegies. So be it; but suppose the four poems were all Donne’s, and Jonson had copies of them in his papers, the link remains. He told Drummond that he had one of Donne’s Elegies by heart; and he believed imitation to be a requisite in the poet — “To make choice of one excellent man above the rest, and so to follow him till he grow very He; *or so like him, as the copy may be mistaken for the principal.*” We know from many sources that for Jonson the poet *par excellence* was Horace; but Jonson was an eclectic reader and writer, and had more than one model. Of all the *English* poets, I know none who influenced him more than Donne. Space will not permit me to quote more than one poem.

Can Beautie that did prompt me first to write
Now threaten, with those meanes she did invite?
Did her perfections call me on to gaze,
Then like, then love; and now would they amaze?
Or was she gracious afarre off, but neere
A terror? or is all this but my feare?
That as the water makes things, put in’t streight,
Crooked appeare, so that doth my conceipt:
I can helpe that with boldnesse; and Love sware,
And Fortune once, t’assist the spirits that dare.
But which shall lead me on? both these are blind:
Such guides men use not who their way would find,
Except the way be errour to those ends:
And then the best are still the blindest friends!
Oh how a lover may mistake! to thinke
Or Love or Fortune blind, when they but winke
To see men feare: or else for truth and state,
Because they would free Justice imitate,
Vaile their owne eyes, and would impartially
Be brought by us to meet our Destinie.
If it be thus, come Love, and Fortune goe,
I’ll lead you on; or if my fate will so,
That I must send one first, my choyce assignes
Love to my heart, and Fortune to my lines.

This is very Jonson, not Donne; but the influence is surely apparent. And, though I would not claim Jonson as a metaphysical poet, would this poem have provoked many protests if Professor Grierson had included it in his anthology? Further, original as Donne was, I think there was some influence the other way; we do not know how early Donne may have seen Jonson's poetry. The directness of utterance that is one of his excellences, though not his most characteristic—the Donne of

“I am two fools, I know,
For loving, and for saying so
In whining poetry”

or

“Meet me at London then
Twenty days hence, and thou shalt see
Me fresher and more fat by being with men”—

is not only Jonson's chief distinction as a poet, but his hall-mark. I give four very different examples of Jonson's openings, picked almost at random.

“I am to dine, Friend, where I must be weigh'd
For a just wager . . .”

“Wretched and foolish Jealousy,
How cam'st thou thus to enter me?”

“For Love's sake, kiss me once again . . .”

“Good and great God, can I not think of thee,
But it must straight my melancholy be?”

Of the better known, but scarcely more characteristic, Augustan Jonson—the author of “Drink to me only”, “Wouldst thou hear what man can say”, and “Follow a shadow, it still flies you”—I need say nothing. It has for so long been a commonplace that seventeenth-century poetry ran in two streams, one originating in Donne and the other in Jonson; it has likewise been noticed that the two streams are not quite separate—that just as Cowley and Marvell are part Augustan, so Herrick and even Dryden have traces of the metaphysical. It should be observed how close to one another the two sources themselves lie. As Herford says: “It is plain that for their contemporaries the distinction between these two great men, however clear, was not antithetical at all. . . .

Sharply as they might differ, and express their differences, an indefinable kinship united them." It may be a mistake to try and define the kinship; but it is a historical fact, placing them, opposite to Shakespeare, at the far end of the bridge. Perhaps their quality is best described metaphorically, by the word "lapidary".

The famous speech of Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not to be taken as Shakespeare's serious definition of poetry; it is dramatic, for one thing, put in the mouth of a great warrior and statesman, civilized enough to be tolerant of such "toys" as poetry, but no more. So far as it may be taken for Shakespeare's own opinion, it evidences his irony, humour, and detachment. It is obvious that he did not himself think so lightly of poetry; and if we are drawing conclusions from isolated passages we may remember that in one of his sonnets he compared his powerful rhyme to marble. But, with due allowances, the famous lines describe the quality of Shakespeare's poetry, and distinguish it from Jonson's, whose eyes were firmly fixed upon earth. Shakespeare *glances from earth to heaven*,

"And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

I am not of course speaking of Shakespeare's philosophy in any explicit sense; but of something more impalpable and perhaps more important, the feelings he had about everything he saw, learned, or experienced; those feelings that determine the reality of a man's philosophy, and, if he is an artist, the quality of his art. And it is not an accident that in his latest work, furthest into the seventeenth century, these feelings come out most clearly: notably in Prospero's speech about the "cloud-capped towers" in *The Tempest*.

On the other hand both Donne and Jonson give the impression that they are craftsmen working in stone; and this is as true of Jonson's engraved gems as of his rough-hewn granite. But by this metaphor I do not mean to imply that these two poets had no imagination; to make any such charge against Donne would be silly. I merely mean that they embodied a changed vision of life, and being true poets they had to work in a different way, and even in different materials, from their predecessors. What this change of outlook was, and meant, Professor Willey has clearly explained in *The Seventeenth Century Background*.

I am perhaps trying to say the same thing as Mr. Eliot, when he

described Jonson's poetry as "of the surface". This may be true of his technique, of his artist's eye; but it does not mean that he is in the bad sense superficial, or even that he is unimaginative. However severely he may have restricted his art to the rough and stony material of life, his experience and the pattern of his mind were not so rigidly limited. Two anecdotes in the *Conversations* are to me more interesting than anything else in that fascinating collection of gossip, since they link Jonson with that other world into which the imagination dissolves, diffuses, and dissipates the material fact. He told Drummond that he had "consumed a whole night in lying looking to his great toe, about which he hath seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians, fight in his imagination". And again:

When the King came in England, at that time the Pest was in London, he being in the Country at Sir Robert Cotton's house with old Camden, he saw in a vision his eldest son (then a child and at London) appear unto him with the mark of a bloody cross on his forehead as if it had been cutted with a sword, at which amazed he prayed unto God, and in the morning he came to Mr Camden's chamber to tell him, who persuaded him it was but an apprehension of his fantasy at which he should not be disjected. In the mean time comes there letters from his wife of the death of that boy in the plague. He appeared to him, he said, of a manly shape and of that growth that he thinks he shall be at the Resurrection.

But I am concerned not so much with Jonson's psychology, as with his attitude to the age in which he lived, and his leadership of letters in the first half of the seventeenth century. To these matters the chief clue is the extraordinarily valuable collection of notes to which he gave the odd and characteristic label *Timber*. The full title is significant. It shows that to Jonson himself the interaction between his mind and the age he lived in was decisive; and the word "matter" (a favourite word of his) has particular importance.

Timber; or Discoveries; made upon men and matter: as they have flow'd out of his daily readings; or had their reflux to his peculiar notion of the Times.

As his earlier notebooks perished in the fire of 1623, *Timber* only represents the flux and reflux of the last fourteen years of his life at most. It therefore gives us his final position. The name of Donne occurs only once in it. Shakespeare is the subject of its most celebrated, and far

from its happiest, paragraph. But of all the English names in *Timber*, pride of place goes to Francis Bacon.

Only one among Jonson's poems is addressed to Bacon, and it is very much a State poem, praising the wisdom of the King in raising him to the position of Lord Chancellor. It was written, ironically enough, for Bacon's birthday in 1621, the very year of his fall from political greatness. There are two references to Bacon in the *Conversations*, one describing a mannerism of the Lord Chancellor when he was making speeches, and the other recording a visit to Bacon paid by Jonson on his way to Scotland and a magisterial pun of the great man's upon Jonson's manner of travel on that occasion. It looks as though Jonson's personal acquaintance with Bacon came fairly late in his life; but it certainly made a great impression on him. Herford calls Bacon "the greatest of the very few contemporaries for whom he entertained an unqualified admiration". It seems to have been even more than admiration. Jonson felt Bacon's fall from grace and power as a personal sorrow, if we are to judge from *Timber*.

My conceit of his person was never increased towards him by his place or honours. But I have, and do, reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength: for greatness he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word or syllable for him, as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue; but rather help to make it manifest.

I am not concerned with the truth of Jonson's estimate; "accident" and "virtue" have an odd sound in this context. What I wish to stress is the feeling; to write thus, in so reflective a work as *Timber*, Jonson must have fallen under a strong spell. I firmly believe Jonson to have been a greater man than Bacon: greater as a *man*, more generous and disinterested, certainly more upright, wiser, more closely attached to and nurtured by what is important in life. But in the close affinity Jonson himself clearly felt for Bacon, and the humility he expresses towards him, may be found the strongest clue to Jonson's own position in the seventeenth century.

For he is a Baconian through and through. To him, as to Bacon, ethics are based on the study of nature.

In being able to counsel others, a man must be furnished with an

universal store in himself, to the knowledge of all Nature: that is the matter and seed-plot; there are the seats of all argument and invention. But especially you must be cunning in the nature of Man.

And again

I know no disease of the soul but ignorance: not of the arts and sciences, but of itself—yet relating to those it is a pernicious evil, the darkener of man's life, the disturber of his reason and common confounder of truth; with which a man goes groping in the dark no otherwise than if he were blind.

But to Jonson Nature is more than the sum of things, the visible universe to be studied; she is a force and being with a life independent of the life of the individual.

I cannot think Nature is so spent and decayed that she can bring forth nothing worth her former years. She is always the same, like herself: and when she collects her strength, is abler still. Men are decayed, and studies: she is not.

She has a law: not merely physical laws, but an ethical law.

He that can order himself to the law of Nature is not only without the sense, but the fear, of poverty.

And in the following passage she has not only a law but an influence, which we can either resist or submit to:

It is a false quarrel against Nature that she helps understanding but in a few; when the most part of mankind are inclined by her thither if they would take the pains; no less than birds to fly, horses to run, etc.

There may be little warrant for this belief, which the Renaissance writers probably derived from Aristotle; but more than anything else it distinguishes Jonson's age from ours. Our new philosophy teaches us that everyone has his inescapable intelligence factor: a kind of fatalism that approximates to the static systems of the Middle Ages, though without any consoling belief in a merciful God. Our civilization will not do any good until it recovers the capacity for believing in something besides the trappings of life.

Jonson was probably more of a Christian than Bacon; his life attests it, and I have quoted two passages in which he speaks of himself as praying in the stress of strong feeling. At the time of the Gunpowder

Plot he gave evidence that his conversion to the Church of Rome had not undermined his loyalty; and he also gave evidence of a sturdy conscience in refusing to give up his adherence to that Church under pressure—he did not do so until some years later. But God occupies much the same place in the background of Jonson's ethic as in that of Bacon's.

Man is read in his face: God in his creatures; but not as the philosopher, the creature of glory, reads him, but as the Divine, the servant of humility: yet even he must take care not to be too curious. For to utter truth of God but as he thinks only may be dangerous; who is best known by our not knowing. Some things of him, so much as he hath revealed or commanded, it is not only lawful but necessary for us to know: for therein our ignorance was the first cause of our wickedness.

Even in this passage I recognize sincere piety; but its doctrine is not far from "Presume not God to scan". And I cannot refrain from the pleasure of translating Jonson's Latin definition of a Puritan:

A Puritan is a heretical hypocrite, driven out of his wits by his opinion of his own acuteness in finding (as he thinks) certain errors in a few of the dogmas of the Church: so that, stricken with a pious madness, he fights frantically against the magistrates, thinking that he is obeying God.

So much for Milton. Whatever the heretical hypocrite may think, Jonson is quite clear that God and the magistrates operate in different departments. In all this there is nothing abnormal: nothing to distinguish Jonson's religion from, say, Sir Thomas Browne's.

But I must pass to Jonson's literary position and influence. I am glad to accept Dr. Percy Simpson's judgment in *Essays and Studies* 1944 that Jonson had "an erudition so vast that only two writers of the century—Bacon and Milton—could vie with him". This does not attract the twentieth century to him. But throughout most of the seventeenth century any poet ambitious of lasting fame took it for granted that he must be learned; it was not until the Restoration period that contempt for learning became respectable. The ridiculous controversy (not yet extinct) between the Ancients and the Moderns was an unexpected first-fruit of the new philosophy. Dr. Simpson contends that Jonson would have tried to hold the balance in this controversy, and supports his contention with an apt quotation from *Timber*. He is certainly in the right, though it is practically impossible to imagine Jonson taking part in such a debate. Ignorance of the arts and sciences was to him

pernicious; "the darkener of man's life, the disturber of his reason and common confounder of truth": there was no question of date—one must know the literature and philosophy of Greece and Rome, as well as what the artists and scientists of one's own day were achieving. This arduous programme did not seem inconsistent with poetic achievement; but within a century it had begun to be an impossible ideal for anyone, or at least an unpractical aim. So the sons of enlightenment have split up into two camps, the "scientists" and the "humanists". A new renaissance might demand of its *poets* (not of everyone) that they should educate themselves *both* in the classical languages, literatures, and philosophies, *and* in the Natural Sciences.

Dr. Simpson will not allow that Jonson's art was impaired by a pedantic observance of rules; but he appears to think that his conception of comedy did impair it. "His portraits are firmly and clearly drawn, but they lack warmth and the soft play of life." How far this of itself is a defect is a difficult problem of literary criticism. But let us admit that the texture and structure of Jonson's plays are particularly rigid: this is not because he slavishly imitated classical models or followed neo-classic rules, but because he was determined to make literature conform to the new philosophy. His literary creed may be linked to his philosophical notions by a passage in *Timber* quoted from John Hoskyns.

The conceits of the mind are pictures of things, and the tongue is the interpreter of those pictures. The order of God's creatures in themselves is not only admirable and glorious, but eloquent; then he who could apprehend the consequences of things in their truth, and utter his apprehensions as truly, were the best writer or speaker.

This is a noble sentence; but what is interesting in it is the form that their faith in Nature takes. It is a declaration of independence, both against scholasticism and against Platonic idealism. The poet's conceits are pictures of *things*, not of abstractions; on the other hand he is not an imitator of imitations, but of things which *in themselves* belong to a glorious and eloquent order.

This is a very different point of view from that of Sidney in the *Apology*. Both Sidney and Jonson accept Aristotle's definition of poetry, but they interpret it differently and I think antithetically. Sidney writes:

Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *mimesis*, that is to say a representing, counterfeiting, or

figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture; with this end, to teach and delight.

But what of the picture? What is it of, and how is it derived? Not from Nature.

There is no art delivered to mankind that hath not the works of Nature for his principal object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend as they become actors and players, as it were, of what Nature will have set forth. . . . Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature . . . so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but *freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit*.

This too has its nobility, but what it means is far from clear; and it appears to proclaim anarchy. Sidney, however, is the very reverse of an anarchist; he is an idealist; he recognizes a moral power both compelling and guiding the poet. "Right poets," he says,

be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight, and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, *into the divine consideration of what may be and should be*.

This clearly refers to Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history, which Sidney quotes a little later on with remarkable accuracy. But by a deft sleight of hand he makes an all-important change in Aristotle's dictum, to bring it into line with his own idealism. To Aristotle, poetry "imitates what *would* happen . . . according to probability or necessity"—that is to say, what is in accordance with natural laws. To Sidney, it represents what *should* be—that is to say, what ought to happen according to the moral law. Unfortunately, what *would* happen and what *should* happen are not always the same.

Jonson's relationship to Aristotle is equally clear: his attitude to him, not quite so clear. On the one hand he quotes Bacon's protest against making Aristotle a dictator; on the other hand, he writes elsewhere:

But whatsoever Nature *at any time* dictated to the most happy, or long exercise to the most laborious, that the wisdom and learning of Aristotle hath brought into an art: because he understood the causes of things: and what other men did by chance or custom, he

doth by reason; and not only found out the way not to err, but the short way we should take not to err.

We must suppose that he took from the spirit of the age both a suspicion of Aristotle as the philosopher of the Schoolmen, and a pretty unbounded reverence for him as the author of the *Poetics*. When Jonson gives his definition of a poet, towards the end of *Timber*, he comes extraordinarily close to Aristotle.

A poet is that which by the Greeks is called *κατ' ἐξοχήν ὁ ποιητής*, a maker or a feigner: his art an art of imitation or feigning; *expressing the life of man* in fit measure, numbers, and harmony, according to Aristotle.

This phrase "expressing the life of man" is about as exact a modern equivalent as could be found for what Aristotle meant by "imitating the generic", except that Aristotle does not explicitly limit the field of poetry to *human* experience. Where Sidney distorts Aristotle's theory, Jonson interprets it correctly, because he was quite prepared to make poetry the handmaid of science: and that was because he was a whole-hearted Baconian. This phrase of Jonson's is of very great historical significance: it sums up the new programme for literature—the limited but ambitious programme of neo-classicism, pointing the way to the great achievement of our eighteenth-century literature, from Defoe to Gibbon. It is also notable, in view of Jonson's formula for poetry, that it was carried out in prose works rather than in verse, with the one outstanding exception of *Paradise Lost*. In this period writers recognized no essential difference between poetry and prose, so that the hall-mark of what we call poetry came to be more and more superficial. This was what chiefly led to Wordsworth's "remonstrance in behalf of truth and nature".

It is characteristic of Jonson that he thinks of literature primarily as an education: not for children only (as Plato allowed), nor for those without the desire to learn (which was Sidney's shrewd suggestion), but for the leaders of men.

A Prince without letters is a pilot without eyes. . . . And how can he be counselled that cannot see to read the best counsellors (which are books)? For they neither flatter us nor hide from us.

This is a somewhat naïve argument. It is true that books have to be more detached from their particular readers than our personal friends and

acquaintances are in what they say to us. But Plato came nearer to the problem, in his ingrained distrust of books as the subtlest flatterers of Everyman. His own masters taught by direct influence, by a method rather than by the written word; and the dialectical form of his writings is a sort of insurance against the over-easy suspension of disbelief that overtakes some readers. But our great Renaissance writers—Milton, for example—strongly as they felt the spell of Plato, did not share his suspicion of books; all the more so because Plato himself was by that time a book. And poetry had come to mean, for most of them, the philosophical product that Aristotle asserted it to be. The title of “The Mirror for Magistrates” is significant, and most typical of the Renaissance; and Spenser’s statement of his aims in writing the *Faerie Queene* even more so. But it is in the first half of the seventeenth century that the claim is most clearly staked out, and by Jonson:

There be some men are born only to suck out the poison of books. . . . And such are they that only relish the obscene and foul things in poets: which makes the profession taxed. But by whom? Men that watch for it and (had they not had this hint) are so unjust valuers of letters as they think no learning good but what brings in gain. It shows they themselves would never have been of the professions they are but for the profits and fees. But if another learning, well used, can instruct to good life, inform manners, no less persuade and lead men than they threaten and compel, and have no reward, is it therefore the worse study? I could never think the study of Wisdom confined only to the Philosopher; or of Poetry¹ to the Divine; or of State to the Politic. But that he which can feign a commonwealth (which is the Poet), can gown it with counsels, strengthen it with laws, correct it with judgments, inform it with religion and morals, is all these. We do not require in him mere elocution, or an excellent faculty in verse; but the exact knowledge of all virtues and their contraries, with ability to render the one loved, the other hated, by his proper embattling them. The philosophers did insolently to challenge only to themselves that which the greatest generals and gravest councillors never durst. For such had rather do than promise the best things.

This is turning the tables on Plato with a vengeance. And, whatever the merits on both sides of the argument, this is the spirit that produced *Paradise Lost*.

¹ I suppose this was a slip of Jonson’s pen. The context requires another word, preferably “Virtue”, which is claimed later on as a concern of the poet’s. “Piety” (Gifford’s emendation) makes sense, and *might* have been misread by a very careless compositor.

Two words merit special attention: "profession" and "learning". Jonson's whole life-work aimed to establish literature as a profession; and his whole attitude implies that it is a learned profession. The professionalizing of literature has not been sheer gain; but if literature was to survive in the modern world, it had to come. It was the ready acceptance of the new philosophy by the most prominent literary figure of the early seventeenth century that pointed the way to it. As always, Jonson acted according to his theory. He attached himself to two successive kings, and presented himself, with good humour and without servility, for payment.

The humble petition of poore Ben,
To th'best of Monarchs, Masters, Men,
King Charles.

Doth most humbly show it

To your Majesty your Poet:
That whereas your royall Father,
James the blessed, pleas'd the rather
Of his speciall grace to letters
To make all the Muses debtors
To his bountie; by extension
Of a free poetique pension,
A large hundred markes annuitie,
To be given me in gratuitie
For done service, and to come. . . .

Please your Majestie to make
Of your grace, for goodnesse sake,
Those your Father's markes your pounds. . . .

He thinks he is due for a rise of stipend in the new reign. It was to be payment "for done service"; but the service was simply the writing of poetry—it was a "free" poetic pension. There is some eulogy of the Royal Family among Jonson's poetic work; but it was not for that that he asked payment. If he was worth paying, it was because he was a good poet, and therefore a pillar of the commonwealth. Milton thought of himself in the same way; but times had changed, and Milton looked to Cromwell; and it was characteristic of him, and of the new profession of letters, that when the times changed again he claimed respect and even immunity from the restored monarchy, and that Charles II recognized the validity of the claim. Of course this association between letters and the commonwealth by no means prevented poets from championing freedom of person and thought. Both Jonson and Milton did so.

This new status for the poet carries with it a heavy responsibility; his is a *learned* profession. By learning Jonson does not primarily mean knowledge of the ancients. "In being able to counsel others, a man must be furnished with an universal store in himself, *to the knowledge of all Nature.*" He must also be able to "apprehend the consequences of things in their truth", and have an "exact knowledge of all virtues and their contraries". So the poet, like the lawyer and the doctor, must submit to an arduous professional training. Jonson distinguishes, in his profession too, between the "true artificer" and the quack.

It cannot but come to pass that these men who commonly seek to do more than enough, may sometimes happen on something that is good and great; but very seldom. And when it comes, it doth not recompense the rest of their ill.

Thus I have heard qualified medical men speak of practitioners who lack the proper qualifications.

Jonson's conception of poetry falls short of the high moral idealism of Sidney, and the organic vision of Coleridge. When, later on in *Timber*, he sets out the qualifications, natural and acquired, to be demanded of the poet, we cannot entirely regret that he was not entrusted with the drafting of rules for an actual academy or trade union of poets. He would have welcomed the opportunity. As it was, the course of events in England during the seventeenth century gave him just that amount of influence that was beneficial to English poetry, and no more. The influence of Donne petered out; that of Spenser was kept alive by Milton, but only just kept alive. It was Jonson's conception of poetry, and the impetus he gave to it by his own work, that provided our writers between Donne and Wordsworth with an intelligible aim, with enough discipline and just enough elbow-room to keep English letters alive.

Most of what Jonson says about style, both in *Timber* and in and about his plays, depends on the professional values and principles I have indicated. This, for example:

A man should so deliver himself to the nature of the subject whereof he speaks that his hearer may *take knowledge of his discipline* with some delight . . .

His famous principle of "matter above words" comes from the same sources. The poet "must first think and excogitate his matter; then choose his words, and examine the weight of either".

Of the two (if either were to be wished) I would rather have a plain downright wisdom than a foolish and affected eloquence.

The writer's strength must lie in his adaptability; he cannot afford to be a specialist—his business is with all Nature.

. . . though a man be more prone and able for one kind of writing than another, yet he must exercise all. For, as in an instrument, so in style, there must be a harmony and concent of parts.

This principle Jonson conscientiously followed in his own writings.

His most interesting pronouncements concern the relationship between sense and diction. In the following passage he describes sense as the soul of all speech, whereas Coleridge was later to call it the body of poetic diction: which neatly illustrates the difference between their two philosophies.

The sense is as the life and soul of all language, without which all words are dead. Sense is wrought out of experience, the knowledge of human life and actions, or of the liberal arts. . . .

The experience of which he here speaks is that of Everyman; but from the general reservoir of language the artist selects only that which is appropriate to his immediate purpose.

Words are the people's; yet there is a choice of them to be made. . . . They are to be chose according to the persons we make speak, or the things we speak of. Some are of the Camp, some of the Council-board, some of the Shop, some of the Sheep-cote, some of the Pulpit, some of the Bar.

I quote this not because I think very highly of it; so far as it is not obvious, it hardly seems a sound principle for any writer to follow. It suffers from the same sort of doctrinaire bias as Wordsworth's (completely different) theory about humble and rustic speech. But it illustrates very clearly Jonson's conception of the poet as a craftsman, judiciously selecting the appropriate timber for the particular article he is making and for the use to which it is destined. And Jonson's general theory of diction is sounder than Wordsworth's.

Custom is the most certain mistress of language, as the public stamp makes the current money. . . . Yet when I name custom, I understand not the vulgar custom: for that were a precept no less dangerous to language than life, if we should speak or live after the manners

of the vulgar; but that I call custom of speech which is the consent of the learned, as custom of life, which is the consent of the good.

The "consent of the learned" sounds, perhaps, too academic to our ears; if it does so, that is a sign of the rift between learning and literature to which I have referred. But Jonson probably means nothing more sinister than what we should, less elegantly, call "educated usage". He is by no means opposed to change; but new expressions have not the stamp of currency until they have been adopted by educated people. There is a time-lag: "the eldest of the present, and newest of the past, language is the best."

As a guide to *prose* usage this could scarcely be bettered. But when Jonson speaks of metaphor (or "translation", as he calls it), the limitations of his Baconian point of view appear at once. Even Aristotle had singled out metaphor as the especial sign of poetic genius. Jonson actually finds it necessary to ask what right it has to exist at all, since it departs from the exact correspondence of words to things upon which, for Bacon, the advancement of learning depended; and he can find little defence for it except as a makeshift, which would disappear in a fully civilized world, or at most be worn occasionally as a kind of fancy dress, though clearly not for serious occasions.

But why do men depart at all from *right and natural ways of speaking*? Sometimes for necessity, when we are driven, or think it fitter to speak that in obscure words, or by circumstance, which uttered plainly would offend the hearers. Or to avoid obscenity, or sometimes for pleasure and variety, as travellers turn *out of the highway*, drawn either by the commodity of a footpath, or the delicacy or freshness of the fields.

Even in this most unpoetical utterance Jonson cannot entirely suppress the poet in himself; but it is curious to find him recording twice in *Timber* the notion that metaphor is a device for avoiding obscenity. It is so used; few theorists are so thorough-going in their recognition of the practical problems of authorship as Jonson is. But the whole tone of this note puts Jonson in a different poetical and philosophic world from Shakespeare.

It is natural that Jonson, who was so insistent on the need for critical judgment in the artist, should have regarded criticism and creative writing as branches of the same art; or parallel arts, meeting at infinity. Criticism demands the same qualities as poetry, but it is a dangerous art, both for what it can do to poems and for what it can do to poets; we had

better therefore see that the critic belongs to our trade union, and only allow the *best* poets to practise in this further profession.

To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets; and not of all poets, but the best. . . . It is true, many bodies are the worse for the meddling with; and the multitude of physicians hath destroyed many sound patients with their wrong practice. But the office of a true critic or censor is not to throw by a letter anywhere, or damn an innocent syllable, but lay the words together and amend them; judge sincerely of the author and his matter, which is the sign of solid and perfect learning in a man.

At least this shows an admirable respect for the posthumous rights of authors, which English editors of the next hundred years were suffered to sacrifice to a licentious itch for emendation. It is pleasant to recall that Dr. Johnson, who in many respects resembled his older namesake, re-affirmed in his Preface to Shakespeare the principle of preserving the old text wherever possible.

Lastly, Jonson's choice of comedy as the peculiar vehicle for his learning is of a piece with his philosophy of literature and life. I shall say nothing of his theory of comedy, or of his qualities as a comic dramatist; much has been written upon these matters, and I cannot here add to it. What matters about Jonson's comedy of humours is his firm grasp of the notion of eccentricity, which implies the measurement of everyone against a natural norm; and his sound instinct in linking this notion with comedy, which is society's most effective weapon against the contrary and anarchical tendencies in human nature. This enabled him to raise comedy to the level of a serious criticism of life, different in aim and character from tragedy, but not inferior.

III

THE CHARACTER AND PRIVATE LIFE OF EDMUND BURKE¹

by SIR PHILIP MAGNUS

One and a half centuries have rolled by since the death of Edmund Burke, and history has passed no final judgement upon him. This indefinite suspension of judgement is a most remarkable fact. It may be objected that the verdict of history is never final; that every generation is liable to pay regard to different facets in the careers of the great men of the past, and to re-interpret those careers in contemporary terms. Nevertheless to most of the great men of history the old tag—"Securus judicat orbis terrarum" can safely be applied. There is no appeal from the long-term verdict of history. In Burke's case no such long-term verdict has been pronounced. During his lifetime and for a few years after his death his character and personality were the subject of heated controversy, but the issue was never resolved. Burke is still the most frequently quoted of all our great statesmen, and if we wish to explain why history has failed to make up its mind about him the first need is, I think, to attempt an assessment of his character and personality. That is my object this afternoon.

I suggest that there are four main reasons why history has failed to make up its mind about Burke. The most important of these was the nature of his private life. I shall deal at some length with this matter, but before I begin I will venture to remind you of his essential dates.

Burke was born in Dublin in 1729 and came to London in 1750 to read for the Bar. He did not take to the law and for some years led a wandering, Bohemian life towards the end of which he began to build up a literary reputation. He published a monumentally dull book on the "Sublime and the Beautiful" which had a great vogue in Germany as well as here. His chance came in 1765 when he was appointed private secretary to Lord Rockingham who had just become head of the Government. A seat was found for him in the House of Commons and

¹ A lecture given at the Alliance Hall to members of the English Association on Saturday, 18 September, 1948.

thereafter he was on firm ground. He died in 1797 and was buried at Beaconsfield where he had lived for nearly thirty years.

Soon after Burke came to London in 1750 he formed a close friendship with a certain William Burke who was no relation, although he was sometimes dignified with the name of kinsman. William Burke in later years had a very dusty reputation, but Edmund remained intimately associated with him throughout the whole of his life. In 1771 Edmund Burke told the Bishop of Chester, who had gone so far as to describe his house as "a hole of adders", that he owed everything in this world to William who had shown him the closest and longest friendship, and had pursued it "with such nobleness in all respects as has no example in these times and would have dignified the best periods of history". Six years later he described William to Philip Francis in India as "a friend I have tenderly loved, highly valued, and lived with in an union not to be expressed, quite since our boyish years". This inexpressible union involved the sharing by William of a common home and a common purse with Edmund and Edmund's wife.

William Burke had been educated at Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford, where he had made useful friends. He was what the Americans call an aggressive type, and his push and ability secured him office as Under-Secretary to General Conway in the Rockingham administration of 1765. It was to William that Edmund owed his appointment as private secretary to Rockingham in the same year.

In many eighteenth-century memoirs "the Burkes" are referred to in a rather mysterious way. They consisted not only of Edmund and William Burke, but also of Edmund's wife, Jane, Edmund's younger brother, Richard, and ultimately of Edmund's son, who was also named Richard. All the Burkes with the exception of Edmund remained unmarried; their domestic lives centred entirely round Edmund and his wife Jane with whom they all shared a common home and a common purse. Edmund adored them all and thought them perfect in every way.

Edmund married in 1757 and the marriage was ideally happy. In the same year his young brother Richard crossed from Dublin to London and was established in the City. He soon left for the West Indies and was by William's influence appointed in 1763 Receiver-General of His Majesty's revenues in Grenada. He returned to England in 1766 and was active on the Stock Exchange.

At this time Edmund and William Burke were generously maintaining in Italy an Irish boy named James Barry who later became a famous artist. When the Rockingham Government fell in July, 1766, William

reassured Barry by telling him that the Burkes' fortunes were now in such a good way that it made no difference to them whether Edmund was employed or not. William remained in office for a short time under Chatham, who succeeded Rockingham. When William resigned in December, 1766, he told Barry that he was not to worry. The Burkes' affairs were now so well arranged that they had not a temptation to swerve an inch from the straightest path of perfect honour.

Edmund Burke had formed plans for visiting his young protégé in Italy, but he was diverted another way. In 1768 he suddenly purchased for twenty thousand pounds a six-hundred-acre estate at Beaconsfield. Twenty thousand pounds was a large sum in those days and ten years previously Burke had been practically penniless. Boswell, when he first saw Gregories, or Butler's Court, as Burke's property was known, was overcome with wonder at the appearance of a suite of rooms hung with valuable pictures in rich, gilded frames. There were, amongst others, seven landscapes by Poussin, a fine Titian, and a considerable collection of marbles. Samuel Johnson, who was very intimate with Burke, although they never discussed politics, did not share Boswell's rapture. He growled out a dry Latin tag to express his feelings—"Non equidem in video; miror magis," which could be paraphrased: "I am too astonished to ask questions."

Edmund's purchase of his Beaconsfield estate represented an attempt to capitalize the various speculations in which the Burkes were involved. It is not particularly pleasant to stir up mud, but I am bound to sketch briefly the outlines of a somewhat sordid story which concerns West Indian lands and East India stock. It was widely known that the Burkes had been gambling on a huge scale in East India stock. Edmund denied in 1772 that he had ever been a holder of this stock, and he was probably tempted to equivocate by his unwillingness to weaken the strength of his opposition to Chatham's Indian policy. Between September, 1766, and May, 1767, the proprietors of East India stock compelled the Company to increase the annual rate of dividend from six to twelve and a half per cent. When Chatham took office in July, 1766, he decided that it was time to assert the interest of the Crown in Indian affairs. An Act was accordingly passed to require the Company to pay £400,000 a year to the Treasury in return for the far-reaching privileges which it enjoyed. The Company was at the same time restrained from increasing its annual rate of dividend by more than one per cent in any one year.

Burke bitterly opposed this measure. He opposed it on the ground that it constituted an invasion of the sacred rights of property in general

28 THE CHARACTER AND PRIVATE LIFE OF EDMUND BURKE
and of the East India Company's charter in particular. It was, however, notorious that he stood to lose heavily as a result of any restriction in the annual rate of dividend declared by the Company or any fall in the value of the stock.

In 1769 a set back occurred in India. Hyder Ali of Mysore, who was at war with the Company, scored a brilliant success with his cavalry. He arrived at the gates of Madras and had to be bought off on his own terms. As soon as the news was known in England there was a sensational collapse in the value of East India stock. George Grenville was told by his secretary that the Burkes and Lord Verney would be among the chief sufferers. Verney was a wealthy guinea-pig who was used by William Burke to finance his vast gambling transactions. Verney had accommodated both Edmund and William Burke in Parliament by presenting them to pocket boroughs which he controlled.

The great stockbroking firm of Delafontaine collapsed under the strain, and when the firm's books were inspected it was found that the Burkes, and an associate in their West Indian land speculation named Laughlan Maclean, had been the largest buyers of East India stock on margin. Their differences, which they were unable to meet, were enormous, and they all borrowed money where they could. Edmund borrowed large sums from Rockingham, which were never repaid. When Rockingham died in 1782 it was found that he had, by Will, cancelled the bonds. He borrowed also from others, including Joshua Reynolds and David Garrick. The Burkes wasted no time in licking their wounds. They set to work at once to mend their fortunes. Richard Burke left the Stock Exchange, where his reputation was bad, in order to resume his employment as Receiver-General in Grenada, where it was even worse. He was known as Duck instead of Dick Burke on the Stock Exchange, because, when a man was slow in meeting his liabilities, he was said to be waddling after the manner of ducks. He first had to resist an attempt to force him to resign, and thereafter as soon as he had returned to the West Indies he purchased, in the autumn of 1770, a large and valuable tract of land from the indigenous native inhabitants of the island of St. Vincent.

Richard Burke paid almost nothing for his purchase. The indigenous natives were a dwindling and insignificant race, vastly outnumbered by white settlers and imported negroes. Nobody supposed that these natives had any title to dispose of the lands which Richard purported to have bought for a song. In any case the land question in St. Vincent was at that time *sub judice*. The Privy Council had been called in to

adjudicate on the question of European claims versus native rights which had already provoked one rebellion and now threatened to provoke another. Richard's intervention at such a time was preposterous. He tried to use his official position in the neighbouring island of Grenada to browbeat the Council of St. Vincent into admitting his claim. The Council of St. Vincent very properly retaliated by making a retrospective order to invalidate all agreements entered into with the indigenous inhabitants. Between 1770 and 1776 Richard Burke, actively supported by Edmund on the home front, was at continuous odds with the authorities over his land claim. The Governor of Grenada complained constantly to the Colonial Secretary of Richard's conduct. Edmund Burke, in 1773, devoted an entire chapter of the *Annual Register*, which he edited, to an attempt to prove Richard's claim. He urged that however insignificant the indigenous inhabitants might be they yet, by virtue of being indigenous, possessed an inalienable natural right to do as they pleased with their own. He confessed to Rockingham that unless his brother's claim could be substantiated he saw no way out of the difficulties in which he had been plunged as a result of another and even more ruinous fall in the value of East India stock.

Backed by the irrepressible Lord Verney, William Burke had been punting once again. Verney was so unbusinesslike that it is impossible to unravel all the details of his financial relations with the Burkes. In 1769 the Burkes appear to have owed Verney twenty-five thousand pounds. The situation at that time was black but not hopeless. Young Barry was still maintained in Italy, with a warning that he must be more careful in drawing bills for the future so as to leave his friends time in which to look out for money to meet them. Unhappily within four years a fresh disaster occurred which almost completely knocked the bottom out of the East India stock market. The occasion was the publication of the Report of the Secret and Select Committee which had been appointed to consider the Indian problem. That report released one of those unpredictable outbreaks of moral indignation which in this country from time to time carry everything before them and cannot be controlled. "India," Chatham wrote, "teems with iniquities so rank that they smell from earth to heaven". The Chairman of the Committee, General Burgoyne, spoke of "the most atrocious abuses that ever stained the name of civil government." Even Horace Walpole was mildly stirred at Strawberry Hill. He wrote to Sir Horace Mann in Florence: "The groans of India have mounted to Heaven. Oh, my dear Sir, we have outdone the Spaniards in Peru!" In these

circumstances a Regulating Act was introduced into Parliament to confer upon the Crown a measure of control over Indian affairs. The threat of Government interference to stop abuses caused a heavy fall in the value of East India stock. Burke violently opposed the Regulating Act. He went so far as to draw up a ridiculous memorandum in which he suggested that the proprietors of East India stock should march in procession from the India House in Leadenhall Street to Westminster and stand in attitudes of supplication in all the corridors imploring Parliament not to deprive them of their property rights. In the *Annual Register* he admitted that abuses had probably occurred, but added that riches, dominion and patronage must always prove a temptation to the continence of power. This dispassionate attitude needs to be contrasted with the view he took later when he was conducting the impeachment of Warren Hastings on charges of spoliation and oppression. Until the last moment Burke hoped that the influence of the East India stockholders would prove strong enough to defeat the Government's policy of interference. The denouement is inimitably depicted in the racy pages of William Hickey's diary. On 17 January, 1773, a party which included William Hickey, his father, Joseph Hickey, and William Burke, spent a night at Marlborough on the road from Bath to London:

"Come, now, Will," said Hickey senior, to William, after supper, "as all here present are sincerely devoted to you, tell us what is your true state with regard to Indian stock."

"I will tell you, Joe, honestly and fairly," replied William. "Here is a letter which I received from my broker this day, an hour before we left Bath, clearly demonstrating that was I to retire now I could realize eighty thousand pounds."

"Then for God's sake, my dear Will, do so. Cut forthwith, without losing a day."

"No, no, my friends, not yet!" William said. "Our party act upon a certainty and are not to be shaken. When we started I was let into the secret, and I know it could not be otherwise. The sum I fixed upon was a plum. I shall soon accomplish my object and shall then bid them good morning."

A "plum" was Stock Exchange slang for a hundred thousand pounds. For two months more the issue hung in the balance, but at the end of that period the reformers prevailed and the stock slumped downwards again. William, who was absolutely ruined, fled the country. His friend, Verney, lost a hundred thousand pounds.

After this culminating disaster it became more than ever necessary

to put through Richard Burke's West Indian business without delay. Edmund Burke at the time was threatening the Prime Minister, Lord North, with impeachment on account of the Government's American policy. Nevertheless Edmund permitted himself to approach North on the subject of his brother's lands. He used as his intermediary a certain junior, not to say juvenile, Lord of the Treasury, by name, Charles James Fox. Fox was twenty years younger than Burke and the close friendship existing between them was one of the wonders of the age. Fox was a youthful member of the Government and extremely chic. Burke was a dowdy, middle-aged, middle-class opposition leader. Fox was one of the greatest gamblers who have ever lived, and his finances at that time, although he had a rich father behind him, were almost as desperate as Burke's. Burke now offered Fox a share in the profits of Richard's West Indian land speculation if Fox could induce North to rule that Richard's purchase was a valid one. The West Indies during the eighteenth century were an exceedingly prosperous part of the Empire, and Horace Walpole ascertained that Richard's lands were worth the enormous sum of one hundred thousand pounds. North, under pressure from Fox, suggested a circuitous way out of the difficulty whereby the Burkes would have netted ninety thousand pounds without the Government losing face. Unhappily North bungled the transaction badly; I will not bore you with all the details; if I may venture to say so Burke's unvarnished account of the details of North's proposition which he sent to Rockingham and which I found among his papers was printed in a life of Burke which I wrote before the war.

Fox was eager to help his friend, and his youthful impatience with North's bungling helped to tempt him to attack North openly in the Commons on a different subject. For this he was dismissed from the Government, while rumour had it that he had been guilty of an attempt to rob the Treasury. Horace Walpole noted spitefully in his Journal that Edmund Burke's judgment, alike in his purchase and in his stock-jobbing, had proved as erroneous as in his politics and in his oratory.

On his return to England Richard Burke, after his failure in the West Indies, was formally charged with misappropriating some ten thousand pounds of His Majesty's revenues. For years he was put to every kind of humiliating shift in order to evade the charge. Judgment was formally entered against him for that sum in the Exchequer in 1780, but Richard appealed and the affair was long drawn out. In November, 1783 when the Fox-North Coalition was in power, and the Burkes' star was for a moment in the ascendant, an astonishing act of jobbery

was perpetrated. By Edmund's influence Richard Burke was appointed Joint Secretary of the Treasury at a salary of three thousand pounds a year. It would have been hard to imagine a more unsuitable appointment. The Treasury promptly relieved Richard of all his liabilities, but he lost his employment in May, 1784, when the Coalition fell, and was again in trouble from the old cause. Edmund's influence was still, however, just sufficiently strong to procure the indefinite postponement of any final action against his brother. Richard Burke's character is well illustrated in a document preserved by Warren Hastings, Edmund's great enemy, among his papers. The document which was drafted and signed by Sir Thomas Kent records that at Brighton, on 4 September, 1776, Kent sat down with Richard Burke and two others to play at dice. In the course of the evening Richard Burke lost just less than fifteen thousand pounds. Next morning Richard confessed that he possessed only two thousand pounds in the world, and he said he could not pay even that amount because he was on the point of leaving for the West Indies to attend to his private affairs and would need it all. For years he protested, calling God to witness each time that he intended to pay in full. In the end of course he never paid anything and never re-visited the West Indies. Judgments for large sums were being entered in the Courts at this time against both Richard and William Burke by tradesmen and others. Richard's only recourse was to read for the Bar where he did no good. His first year's fees were paid by Edmund's intimate friend, Sir Joshua Reynolds. Richard's animal spirits were proof against all adversity. More than once he had to flee abroad in order to escape his creditors, and on one occasion at least he spent a short time in prison, after being arrested for debt at the instance of Lord Verney's heirs. He was rescued by Edmund's powerful and wealthy patrons—Portland and Fitzwilliam. But the most extraordinary part of the story is that Richard died in 1794 in an odour of complete respectability. By Edmund's influence he was appointed Recorder of Bristol, and in that capacity he received the Honorary Freedom of the City and was elected to the Common Council. Edmund's character of his brother, which is preserved among his unpublished papers, differs widely from Sir Thomas Kent's to which I referred just now. Edmund dwelt at length on Richard's "amazing integrity that no temptation could corrupt. . . . When he acted as a criminal judge he entered the Court with awe and terror, as if he were going into the Holy of Holies".

The only comment I could offer on that observation would be to quote from one of Edmund's letters which he wrote while still a school-

boy in Dublin. He told a friend that he was surprised to find how much easier it was to deceive oneself than to deceive others.

William Burke's later history was even more discreditable than that of Richard. He fled to India after the passage of the Regulating Act, to escape being arrested for debt, and after various humiliating vicissitudes (which included the need to invoke the charity of Philip Francis) was appointed, by Edmund's influence, Paymaster of the King's Troops in India at the same time as Richard Burke was appointed Joint Secretary to the Secretary in London. In this manner Edmund was rewarded for his part in the scandalous Fox-North Coalition. Edmund Burke himself was made Paymaster-General at home, and his son was appointed as his assistant.

As Paymaster in India William strained every nerve to make a fortune out of the balances which passed through his hands. He wrote in 1785 to Richard the younger, Edmund's son, whom all the Burkes idolized but who was generally regarded as an effeminate and supercilious puppy, to expatiate on his chance of being able to remit the balance of the public debt, which amounted to six hundred thousand pounds to England. He said that if he was successful he expected to net a profit of twenty-five per cent—a clear hundred and fifty thousand pounds—"to be used of course for our common benefit." He told young Burke how anxious he was to clear himself and the Beaconsfield property. "Depend on it," William wrote, "your father and his son shall never find a doubtful act thrown on them, but the money made in remittance, insurance being paid, is as fair as the produce of a man's own acres." "The crop," William sanctimoniously added, "is in the hand of God."

Edmund Burke strained every nerve in England to advance William's schemes, quite blinded, by affection, to the fact that his friend's plans were flagrantly dishonest. William had two schemes for enriching himself. The first was through a complicated juggle with the Indian Provincial exchange rates; the second was through conjuring up a vast paper debt in India in order that he might net a twenty-five per cent profit by remitting it to England. If William Burke had been successful not only he but all the Burkes would have been enriched. Edmund Burke, if he thought at all, must have been perfectly well aware of this, but he is to be found, nevertheless, actively engaged in pushing William's interests for months after the impeachment of Warren Hastings, in which he played the role of principal prosecutor and accuser, had begun. Peculation and jobbery were two very serious charges against Hastings. In December, 1789, Cornwallis, the Governor-General of Bengal, writing

from Calcutta, characterized William Burke's plan for rigging the exchanges as "scandalous", and that for remitting the public debt as so "extraordinary" that he could not bring himself to believe that it was seriously made. William's reputation in India was a very bad one; he was loud and drunken and in the end, according to Hickey, his only friends were a few flashy, handsome young cads whom everybody detested. Cornwallis considered that the sending of William out to India was a most unnecessary job, and he observed, rightly, that he would himself deserve to be impeached if he countenanced either of William's proposals.

William Burke returned to England in 1793, leaving behind him in India a heavy deficit in the Crown Moneys with which he had been entrusted. He was in danger on the one hand of being prosecuted for embezzlement; on the other of being arrested for debt at the instance of Lord Verney's heirs. "I know," Edmund wrote despairingly, "Mr. Burke must owe money to the Crown. . . . Where is the fund to answer the Crown if everything he has in the world shall go to Lady Fermanagh." In the circumstances Edmund pathetically described the attempt of Lady Fermanagh, who was Verney's heir, to collect a purely private debt as "a deed palpably fraudulent, though not so intended by her ladyship".

The deaths of Lord Verney in 1791 and of Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1792 in fact relieved the Burkes of a great load of debt. Thanks to Verney's death William was enabled to return from India. He brought back with him besides a ruined liver and reputation, a chocolate-coloured native boy of whom he was inordinately fond. He lived with Edmund at Beaconsfield until Edmund's death in 1797, but he suffered from strokes and cannot have been a cheerful companion. He died in 1798, insolvent, in the Isle of Man.

Such in outline was the financial background against which Edmund Burke's life was passed. In a statement preserved among his unpublished papers at Wentworth Woodhouse, which was written some time between his son's death in 1794 and his own death three years later, he declared:

"My affairs were always in a state of embarrassment and confusion, but he [young Burke] and his mother contrived that this should be rarely visible to the world. Everything about us bore the appearance of order. It is incredible with what skill, patience, and foresight, he provided for them, by discreet delay or by method and foresight, and every species of skilful management, in concert with his admirable mother. What is equally wonderful is that they both kept from me, personally, everything that was fretful, teasing or disquieting, so that in truth, I had but a kind

of loose, general knowledge of several things which, if they had, during so many years of other contention and close application to business, come to my knowledge in detail, I am perfectly sure I could not have borne up against them, much less have preserved that cheerfulness and animation which it was visible I enjoyed, whilst everything was untoward enough, within and without."

Burke in fact deliberately closed his eyes to the seamy side of his affairs. It is true that his application to business, as he put it, was intense. His industry was indescribable and his wealth of knowledge prodigious. His speeches and writings were the fruit of immense research and the most elaborate preparation. Burke was, however, incapable of making a dispassionate use of that knowledge and his zeal was sometimes so excessive that it overreached itself. Burke had attached himself in a professional capacity to a group of territorial magnates who were prepared to pay handsomely for the genius which they had hired. But Burke found it an uphill task to keep his employers' noses to the Parliamentary grindstone. Men like Portland, Fitzwilliam, and Richmond, had so many interests outside politics to make their lives useful and agreeable that it was often difficult, and understandably so, to bring them to Westminster at all. In these circumstances Burke occupied himself in drafting an almost incalculable number of letters, memoranda, pamphlets, and speeches, with which he bombarded and often wearied the leaders of his Party. He was always at work, and the way in which his employers regarded him is amusingly illustrated in a letter from the Duke of Richmond, asking him to arrange to have his portrait painted:

"I think a picture of you merely looking one in the face and doing nothing, can never be like, as it must give a representation so different from you real nature. I wish, therefore, to have you painted doing something. The act of speaking can never be well-painted, especially in a single figure. Writing will, I think, do very well, and will suit you exceedingly.

"Pray, therefore call at Mr. Romney's in Cavendish Square (his name is on the door) and begin. I beg the size may be that which is commonly called a head, and that it may be doing something."

Richmond suffered from a high degree from what, in some late eighteenth-century circles, was known as dangerous illumination. He was an advocate of manhood suffrage, but no one, even in his own Party, took him seriously.

One thing should be said by way of excuse for Burke's conduct. During the eighteenth century it was an understood convention of public

life that those who served the State had a right to live on the State. That was the principle on which was based the entire system of sinecure offices, and the many places and pensions which every group distributed to its supporters as soon as it achieved power. Burke never attacked this principle itself; it was the abuse of the principle for corrupt purposes that he attacked. He received all his life large sums of money from the heads of his Party as his reward for organizing and conducting their affairs, and it was in harmony with the feeling of the age that he should have expected to be suitably rewarded for such services. But the scale of life which Burke had adopted and the disastrous speculations in which he was involved, landed him in desperate financial straits. In these circumstances the Burkes were driven to conduct their private affairs in a manner which overstepped the tolerant standards of the time. The fact that Burke deliberately closed his eyes to such matters cannot be regarded as relieving him from his share of responsibility. He regarded all the actions of Will and Dick in such a fond and sanguine light that he was incapable of appreciating the significance of his position. If his friends' schemes had succeeded he would himself have been enriched. In that respect I am afraid that it is impossible to palliate his conduct by relating it to the morality of his age. It is true that Edmund's intentions were always scrupulously honourable; that he was generous to a fault; that his Bill for Economic Reform, even in the emasculated form in which it ultimately became law, dealt a mortal blow at the eighteenth-century system of government by means of what we call jobbery and corruption. But between Burke's intentions and his actions a gulf is fixed which no amount of sophistry can hope to bridge. Not everything was, of course, generally known to his contemporaries, and a proportion of what I have been recounting has only recently been brought to light. Nevertheless, enough was known during his lifetime to afford grounds for suspicion, and such suspicion was particularly damaging to one who stood before the world as a moralist and reformer of abuses. It certainly damaged his contemporary reputation and has worried all those among his admirers who have been in any degree informed as to the facts. Burke was betrayed by a flaw in his nature which may be regarded as tragic on account of the absence of all mean and petty motive. He allowed his judgement to be overwhelmed by the intensity of his family affections.

The imprudence which Burke displayed in the conduct of his private affairs was displayed also in the conduct of his public life. I have only time to cite a few examples. A sensitive man might, I think, have hesi-

tated to accept a salary as Agent in London for the Colony of New York at a time when he was fiercely opposing the Government's policy towards America. Again, when he was in office as Paymaster-General in 1783, Burke restored two suspended civil servants to their places who were known to have embezzled large sums of public money and against whom prosecutions were impending. He acted thus out of pure humanity, but it was a very ill-judged action, and he made things worse by defending it in an even more ill-judged and intemperate manner. In the same year Burke sought to procure for his son the Clerkship of the Pells, the second most valuable sinecure on the Exchequer, which was worth thousands of pounds a year to its possessor at a time when he was trying to force through Parliament a Bill to suppress as many as possible of such abuses. Moreover, he permitted his son to go most indiscreetly about the business. The Clerkship was held by Horace Walpole's elder brother, and Walpole, who disliked Burke, was a tremendous gossip. It is characteristic of Burke that he should have laid himself open to very unpleasant charges which landed him in an unsavoury libel action through his imprudent anxiety to protect men convicted of sodomy from being exposed in the pillory. Burke's language and conduct on many occasions were so extravagant that he became highly unpopular. Many people came to believe that he was unbalanced, if not actually crazy. The result was that the more Burke was held up to the admiration of mankind by his own Party as a kind of superior being, the more loud grew the whispers that this vaunted idol possessed feet of clay. By those who gave him credit for sanity, Burke was widely regarded as a hypocrite, a prig, and a bore. The truth was that he was a prophet who was totally unfitted for the responsibilities of office or the conduct of mundane affairs. It was universally agreed that Burke was one of the greatest figures in the public life of his age, and yet, when the opportunity presented itself, his own Party wisely refrained from according him Cabinet rank. Burke's failure to secure high office has been attributed to aristocratic prejudice, and it is true that he might, in that age, have been well advised to simulate a mild interest in field sports and the turf. Nevertheless aristocratic prejudice had very little to do with his failure to secure promotion. Burke began life at much the same level as Charles Jenkinson who held high office and was made Earl of Liverpool, leaving a son who became Prime Minister. If Burke had shown similar practical ability he could have done the same. Burke described the politician as the philosopher in action, but his closest friends and admirers knew best how temperamentally unfitted Burke was, despite his prophetic genius, to support

the responsibilities of even minor office. Burke himself in the end came to accept this view and during his later years at any rate he never aspired to enter the Cabinet.

I propose now to deal rapidly with the three other factors which, I suggest, have contributed most to obscuring Burke's reputation. In the first place there was no one left after his death to care for his memory. Burke's son died three years before his father after Pitt had grudgingly agreed to confer a peerage and a pension on Burke. The idea of a peerage was dropped after young Burke's death, but a pension totalling three thousand seven hundred a year, most of it for three lives, was conferred. Even so, incidentally, Burke had to borrow further large sums from Fitzwilliam for his immediate needs. Burke left no family and he founded no intellectual tradition, so that when the Napoleonic wars ended it was found that no party or body of men existed which felt called upon to honour his memory. Only in America was there a diffused sentiment of gratitude on account of his championship of the American cause in the dispute which led to the Declaration of Independence. The English Tories for two generations wove their loyalties round the name of Pitt. Later they found a new rallying point in the personality of Disraeli. Disraeli owed much to Burke, but the little root which it had cost Burke so much embarrassment to cast at Beaconsfield was totally obscured during the nineteenth century under a mass of primroses.

Neglected by the Tories, Burke fared worse at the hands of the Whigs who regarded him as a renegade. When that Party's fortunes revived some years after the close of the long war with Napoleon Burke's name was anathema to them. Burke's ideas were reflected for a time by the English "Lake" poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. But the banners of the Lake poets were torn to shreds by the spears of the advancing Victorians, and replaced by every variety of progressive programme as though no Burke had ever arisen to champion the cause of the old order in Europe and interrupt the gradual unfolding of the main currents of eighteenth-century thought. Those currents owed their origin to that junction between French and English thought which was the fundamental event of the eighteenth century. From the solution which resulted the French Revolution was the delayed but inevitable precipitate. The ferment of speculation and enlightenment which had been released in France began to seep backwards across the Channel, and it was Burke's revolt against the main intellectual currents of his age that lent unity and direction to his life. He was defeated in the end by the pressure of forces over which no man living had any control. Through-

out the latter part of the century the industrial revolution was at work undermining every buttress of the old European order of which Burke had constituted himself the prophet. Burke, who would hardly have understood the meaning of the word "progress", held that the world, with all the institutions which it contained, was a direct, mysterious revelation of God's providence into the inner nature of which it was blasphemy to enquire too closely. He reserved his deepest reverence for the Revolution Settlement of 1688. He regarded the fortuitous result of King James's folly and abdication as the most important revelation of divine goodness since the events recorded in the New Testament, and he dedicated his life to the propagation of that belief. In his view the constitutional settlement which resulted was sacred and inviolable. Any imperfections which it might be found to contain were not attributable to the constitution itself but to the imperfect natures of its exponents.

It was from behind that impregnable bastion of Platonic idealism that Burke looked out upon the world. The Rockingham Party to which he devoted his genius was only one of a number of selfish aristocratic groups which were competing at that time for the sweets of office and other personal ends. Its leaders prided themselves on their highmindedness, but in fact they differed from others mainly in being rather more pleasure-loving and less energetic. Burke tried hard to recall his employers to a sense of their responsibilities by enumerating his gospel of aristocratic trusteeship. In so doing he drew an attractive political blue-print, but he was hardly even successful in deceiving himself.

A further reason why Burke's fame has been obscured is that he failed substantially in everything which he undertook. He devoted his life to five "great, just, and honourable causes", as he termed them, and in every one of them he failed. The first of these was the cause of English constitutional liberties. Burke strenuously opposed George III's attempt to use the corrupt elements in the English political life for the purpose of reviving the old prerogative powers of the Crown. The constitutional struggle centred for a time about the person of John Wilkes, and Burke's major contribution to it was his "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents". When Burke argued that the Rockingham Whips alone were capable of saving England he was very naturally laughed at. The virtues of this pamphlet, however, lie in the luminous generalizations in which it abounds concerning the nature of political truth and human psychology. In this respect it is as much assured of immortality as is the "Politics" of Aristotle.

The second of the great causes which engaged Burke's energies was that of English liberties in America. Perhaps the greatest of his speeches on that subject is that on Conciliation (22 March, 1775). It is packed with political wisdom and expressed in imperishable and, indeed, incomparable language.

Burke's efforts were in vain, and the loss of the American war brought George III's attempt at personal rule to an end. Burke at once turned his energies from the West to the East. Burke's championship of the cause of India makes one of the most significant chapters of eighteenth-century history, and he himself, at the end of his life, declared in a most solemn, testamentary manner that he would be content if everything else which he had said or written should be forgotten so long as this were remembered. I do not think, however, that it would be unjust to suggest that Burke's fundamental motive in entering upon this struggle was as much his own as India's need. He was unable to live unless he had at all times some tremendous cause in which he could lose himself and express the passion which fired his being.

Burke's championship of the cause of India led to the seven years' trial of Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of Bengal. The indictment, for which Burke was chiefly responsible, was too widely drawn, and the impeachment ended in acquittal on all counts, and the award of a pension to Hastings by the East India Company and of another to Burke by the Crown.

The fourth great cause which Burke fought was the anti-Jacobin cause. Burke opposed the Jacobins on the same grounds as those on which he had formerly supported the Americans—his zeal for the preservation of specific constitutional liberties, which he regarded as divinely sanctioned and inspired. In America those liberties had been attacked by a tyrannical government; in France they were trampled underfoot by what he termed an ignorant and swinish mob. The threat was the same from whichever quarter the attack proceeded. Burke took his stand on a bedrock of English empiricism: "I must see the things," he said. "I must see the men." Burke maintained that Rousseau's theory of natural rights was a fraud. "Art is man's nature," he declared, and he argued that English constitutional liberties were the most natural species of right that the mercy of God had vouchsafed or that the wisdom of man had discovered.

The last great cause in which Burke was engaged was that of Ireland, his native land. Fitzwilliam was sent to Dublin as Viceroy in January, 1795, and was recalled six weeks later for exceeding his instructions.

Fitzwilliam, a great magnate, was Burke's patron and friend. He was a weak man, completely subservient to Burke's ideas. A most interesting correspondence between Burke and Fitzwilliam during this period is preserved at Wentworth Woodhouse; it ought to be published; indeed, it ought to have been published years ago. I am glad to say that the Historical MS. Commission is now at last going through the papers at Wentworth Woodhouse. For many years before the war the Commission and all professional scholars were denied access to them. Fitzwilliam, egged on by Burke, tried to force Roman Catholic emancipation on Ireland overnight and to upset the system of government which was established there. With Fitzwilliam's dismissal the last chance vanished of a reconciliation from above between the English and Irish peoples, and Burke felt that he had failed miserably in every one of the five great causes to which his life had been devoted.

The final reason, I suggest, why Burke's fame has been obscured is that the political testament which he left behind him is embedded in a great mass of letters, writings, and carefully drafted speeches which, in this hurried and troubled age, are daunting to the general reader. His genius was, in fact, immersed in the great mart and exchange of everyday human life. This is unfortunate in some respects, because Burke is the most profound writer on politics in the whole of our history, and his prose, at its best, is, I venture to suggest, unsurpassed by any other prose in the language. It is impossible obviously to quote you examples at this late hour, but I hope that some people will be tempted by what I have said to take up his published works and look at them again. They will be well rewarded. Burke's political outlook was not shared by all Englishmen, but it was and is the outlook of the dominant and most characteristic section of our people. The instinctive political empiricism of the average Englishman, no matter to what party he belongs, now wears for all time the impress of the character and personality of Edmund Burke. It was Burke's genius which first gave shape and direction to what had formerly been little more than an inchoate mass of ideas floating in the English mind. That is the reason why Burke is the most frequently quoted of all our great statesmen although he never sat in any Cabinet, although he was notoriously unpractical, and although history has found it almost impossible to make up its mind about his place upon its role of fame.

That body of literature which represents Burke's political testament remains to this day the finest school of statecraft that exists. If Burke had only been able to control his temperament he would certainly have

been numbered among the greatest of the great. He was not successful as a man of action because he allowed sentiment to defeat his judgement, but in his writings and carefully drafted speeches he disclosed immense luminous depths of penetration and discernment, and lent life to whatever he touched. Burke took his stand on a foundation of human nature which is the only constant in history. From that firm ground he conducted his campaign against all doctrinaire theories, holding that in proportion as they are theoretically true they are, in practice, politically false. The study of politics is an art and not a science. No exact rules can be laid down for it. But to those who may seek to acquire that art, I suggest that a knowledge of Burke may be the beginning of wisdom.

IV

THE PROSE OF E. R. EDDISON¹

by G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

ERIC RUCKER EDDISON died in August, 1945. Despite what James Stephens has well called the "heroical magnificence" of his prose, he is not known to many readers. The object of this essay is to call attention to the challenge of his work, and at the same time to testify, as I must, to my own admiration. Eddison has obvious faults—incongruities, lapses of taste, mannerisms which are now and then irritating: on the other hand, in his towering fantasy, the sweep of his invention and the grandeur of his style, I find something more than high talent—a vein of genius, setting him apart as one of the most remarkable writers of our age.

This high claim rests on four major works—*The Worm Ouroboros*, *Mistress of Mistresses*, *A Fish Dinner in Memison* and *The Mezentian Gate*. The last three form a trilogy, the scene of which is set partly on this earth, and partly in an afterworld more vividly real to Eddison's imagination, which he names Zimiamvia. The *Fish Dinner* has so far been published only in America, and *The Mezentian Gate*, left unfinished, is still in manuscript. For reasons mainly of space I propose to deal only with *Mistress of Mistresses*² and the *Fish Dinner*.³

Although a man of judgment in practical affairs and a Civil Servant of distinction, Eddison was an extreme romantic. The Court of Frederick II, the passionate men and women of the Renaissance, and the characters of Elizabethan drama, particularly of Webster, made a tremendous appeal to him. So, too, among modern writers, did the heroes and heroines of Conrad. At the same time he was devoted to Homer and to the lyrical poetry of Greece, treasuring in his mind every fragment of Sappho. He had also an intense and scholarly admiration for the Icelandic, which he began to teach himself while still at Eton. It bore

¹ This essay is founded on a paper read to the Bookman Circle. It has been largely revised and in part re-written.

² Fabers (1935).

³ Dutton, New York (1941).

fruit in a fine translation of *Egil's Saga*, strong and rough-hewn according to the style of the original; he characterizes that style as "deliberate, simple, and laconic, using the rough, salt speech of men of their hands: direct, unselfconscious, farmer's talk, unsophisticated, yet classic and noble."

Nourishing his imaginative life at such sources, Eddison had no liking for modern times, with their tendency to compromise, uniformity and mechanism. The action of *A Fish Dinner in Memison* alternates between the England of a few years ago and the ideal land-after-death of Zimiamvia. But in England the foreground, if not the whole ground, is occupied by a society which dwells in noble houses. The great figure of Lessingham is much involved in the lordly governance of foreign affairs; but when he is called away for service abroad, its reality is no more than a distant rumour—indeed, the remoteness of the outside world has this artificial virtue, that all is dwarfed by the individual stature of the man. Lessingham marries the beautiful Lady Mary Scarnside who, early in life and after some years of exalted happiness, is killed in a railway smash. Thereupon—crudely to set down the conclusion—Lessingham, in an agony which has the mark of Berserker fury, burns down his mansion in Wastdale with all its treasures.

Lessingham lives for a further fifty years. In the "Overture" to *Mistress of Mistresses* we see him lying in death: his "face with its Grecian profile, pallid under the flickering candles, facing upwards: the hair, short, wavy and thick, like a Greek god's: the ambrosial darkness of his great black beard. He was ninety years old this year, and his hair was as black and (till a few hours ago, when he leaned back in his chair and was suddenly dead) his voice as resonant and his eyes as bright as a man's in his prime age". Then, in the first chapter, we meet him as a young man of twenty-five in Zimiamvia, where already for five years past he has been rising to greatness as a man of action: we follow him through a brief but full and magnificent career till, at the close of the book, he falls to a treacherous stroke planned by the Vicar of Rerek. This end is foretold by the learned doctor Vandermast in a passage which belongs, in my judgment, to the volume of great English prose called into being by the contemplation of death:

The face of the night was altered now. A cool drizzle of rain dimmed the moon: the gondola seemed to drift abeam, cut off from all the world else upon desolate waters. Vandermast's voice came like the sougning of a distant wind: "The hairless, bloodless, juiceless, power of silence," he said, "that consumeth and abateth and swallow-

eth up lordship and subjection, favour and foulness, lust and satiety, youth and eld, into the dark and slubbery mess of nothingness." Lessingham saw that the face of that old man was become now as a shrivelled death's-head, and his eyes but windows opening inwards upon the horror of an empty skull. And that lynx-eyed mountain nymph, fiercely glaring, crouching sleek and spotted beside him, was become now a lynx indeed, with her tufted slender ears erect and the whiskers moving nervously right and left of her snarling mouth. And Vandermast spoke loud and hoarse, crying out and saying, "You shall die young, my Lord Lessingham. Two years, a year, maybe, and you shall die. And then what help shall it be that you with your high gifts of nature did o'ersway great ones upon earth (as here but to-day you did in Acrozayana), and did ride the great Vicar of Rerek, your curst and untamed horse, till he did fling you to break your neck, and die at the last? What is fame to the deaf dust that shall then be your delicate ear, my lord? What shall it avail you then that you had fair women? What shall it matter though they contented you never? seeing there is no discontent whither you go down, my lord, neither yet content, but the empty belly of darkness enclosing eternity upon eternity. Or what shall even that vision beyond the veil profit you (if you saw it indeed to-night, then ere folk rose from table) since that is but impossibility, fiction and vanity, and shall then be less than vanity itself: less than the dust of you in the worm's blind mouth? For all departeth, all breaketh and perisheth away, all is hollowness and nothing worth ere it sink to very nothing at last."

Zimiamvia, the country where Eddison's genius is consistently at home, is a mountainous land, rich in woods and streams, with white farmsteads dotted in the valleys. It is thinly populated: nobles and great captains throng the ceremonies of State, but the armies which they band together, weaponed with spear and sword, are numbered by a few hundreds of horse and a few thousands of foot. It is a world made for great individuals, lording it, with their retainers, in sumptuous palaces or frowning rock-fortresses: with their scheming and violence, their chivalry and culture, they recall, though with marks of an earlier age, the civilization of fifteenth-century Italy.

The characters speak in a clipped and forcible language, more archaic than the narrative. Here, and in the robust economy of the battle-pieces, the influence of the sagas is strong. The abrupt dialogue and the hard, clear light of the action come as a relief to the prevailing luxury and splendour, scenes where the great men feast by torchlight or exercise their wits in the company of beautiful women. As King Mezentius remarks in the *Fish Dinner*, "'Fore God, matters of state, here in Memison, serve as salt pilchards and fumadoes 'twixt the wines, lest too much

sweetness quite cloy us." Eddison has a gusto for material splendour, for gorgeous banquets and jewels, for physical beauty and physical strength. He gives full rein to fantasy and extravagance. Presence-chambers and dining-halls are built out of huge blocks of precious material, gold and ivory, bronze and stone, elaborately carved and figured. Not seldom the descriptions run to excess and defy all sense of proportion. Yet the saving grace is there, for Eddison has an intoxicating sense of light: it is as though he had learnt from the declining sun, among the mountains which he studied and loved, the power to transfigure solid substance to a thing of no weight or grossness. This same remarkable gift enables him to enchant us with the magic gardens conjured into being by Doctor Vandermast; gardens where time stands still, and dream-like realities of experience are concentrated in an ecstatic moment.

The reader with a taste for romance may easily accept Zimiamvia, with its assemblage of powerful lords and alluring ladies. But now I come to what are, I conceive, real difficulties. Who are the gods of this eclectic world, this highly coloured and barbaric heaven? They are none other than Zeus and Aphrodite: and these deities do not appear as transcendent beings, separate and distinct from the men and women who dwell there. On the contrary, they are identified, in differing degrees of clearness, with the human protagonists. Thus Amalie, Duchess of Memison, Queen Antiope and the Lady Fiorinda are all of them "dresses", or incarnations, chosen for herself by Aphrodite. Amalie and Antiope are at first unaware, or dimly aware, of their essential divinity—being dresses wherein Aphrodite "walked as it were asleep, humble, innocent, forgetful of Her Olympian home"—and they never attain to the full self-consciousness of Fiorinda, in whom the identification with the goddess is complete.

It comes as a shock to find the gods of Greece in a world that delights us with the very un-Greek quality of excess. But we can survive the shock when we realize that they are not, in any purity, the classical Gods of Olympus. I have no doubt that Eddison, who recklessly brings together all that he admires, intended them to be so in greater degree than they are. But his imagination—as is fortunately wont to happen with the creative artist—overrode his intention. The harmony of his whole bizarre conception demanded that Aphrodite should assume many features from the Orient. Often she is less akin to the goddess of Homer or Sappho or Praxiteles than to the terrible Syrian Astarte. Listen, for example, to this description of her, as she appears in the person of Fiorinda:

Hers was a beauty the more sovereign because, like smooth waters above a whirlpool, it seemed but the tranquillity of sleeping danger: there was a hint of harsh Tartarean stock in her high flat cheekbones, and in the slight upward slant of her eyes; a touch of cruelty in her laughing lips, the lower lip a little too full; the upper a little too thin; and in her nostrils, thus dilated, like a beautiful and dangerous beast's at the smell of blood.

The "touch of cruelty" is, indeed, displayed in action. Fiorinda's treatment of Morville, in the *Fish Dinner*—her second husband to meet a violent death—I can only regard as abominably cruel and unjust. Morville, certainly, is no estimable character, but he has every cause to be jealous of Fiorinda's lover, Barganax: a great part of his fault lies in his failure to perceive that Fiorinda is divine, and so failing—under extreme provocation, and after a moment when he has shown "the suddenest, movingest strange humility", a virtue rare in Zimiamvia—he insults her coarsely, as an ordinary man might insult an ordinary wife by whom he has been persistently ignored:

He struck her across the mouth with his glove, saying, in that extreme, "Go your gait, then, you salt bitch."

Her face, all save the smouldering trail of that blow, turned bloodless white. "This may be your death," she said.

But Morville went from the room like a man drunk, for the galling and the blistering of his eyes with broken tears; and so from the house; and so to horse.

Later, in the evening of the same day, when Fiorinda sobs in her lover's presence for thinking on the outrage she has suffered, the note is definitely false.

Well, there it is! I share, to some extent, Morville's blindness. I give all my admiration to Fiorinda's beauty of person, exquisitely robed or in voluptuous naked splendour. I admire her as a lofty, dangerous and unscrupulous woman, or as a goddess of like character, and, as such, she has her just pre-eminence in a country the nobility of which would be nothing without its savage and even brutal aspect. But I rebel when I am asked to recognize her as "*omnium rerum causa immanens*: the sufficient explanation of the world"; one, the service of whom is the only wisdom. And her boundless self-preoccupation is a travesty of that infinite intellectual love with which, in the phrase of Spinoza, God loves His own Self. *Mistress of Mistresses* and the *Fish Dinner* present high matter for the imagination, and the moral or religious censor would deserve to be

prosecuted, should he break in and trespass on this ground. But when, as here and there, the high moral or religious claim is expressed or clearly implied, the censor cannot refuse the invitation to protest.

The truth is that Eddison fell deeply in love with his imagined world, from Fiorinda to the least blade of grass and, like a lover, he could see nothing amiss. He is completely serious and takes his stand on philosophy, reducing Truth, Beauty and Goodness to one ultimate value, Beauty: a thing you may only do, if in Beauty you include not only sensuous beauty of form and beauty of action but also—and not dependent on these—beauty of character, according to the highest conception of the Good. It is his failure to recognize this which I regard as the chief defect in Eddison's Utopia. And yet to bring it into the open is to risk a loss of perspective: for this fault has the same root as his virtue, so that one may almost say—*felix culpa*. It was just because he saw with the eyes of a lover that he was able to present his world with so amazing a vitality.

His philosophical reflections throw light on a point which I have mentioned, viz. that Zeus and Aphrodite are identified, in differing degrees of awareness, with the human protagonists of the drama. "Personality," writes Eddison, "is a mystery: a mystery that darkens as we suffer our imagination to speculate upon the penetration of human personality by Divine, and *vice versa*. Perhaps my three pairs of lovers are, ultimately, but one pair. Perhaps you could as truly say that Lessingham, Barganax, and the King (on the one hand) Mary, the Duchess, and Fiorinda (on the other) are but two persons, each at three several stages of 'awakeness', as call them six separate persons." The result of so fluid a conception of personality is sometimes confusing, but if the reader holds firmly to this clue, it will guide him through the maze. The most perplexing relationship is that between Lessingham and Barganax. In his earthly career Lessingham wins renown in the most diverse spheres, being pre-eminent alike as military leader, artist and mountaineer. In Zimiamvia—where he at length finds Mary again in the person of Queen Antiope—he is first and foremost the man of action, and his previous role as artist and dreamer falls, in a narrower intensity, to Barganax. Between these two, who are cast as chivalrous enemies, there is a close bond of brotherhood, so much so that there are moments of climax when the personality of one passes into that of the other, and each of them, looking into a mirror, sees not his own, but the other's likeness. And in the final scene, when Lessingham is slain by treachery, the mind of Barganax is charged with Lessingham's knowledge of the Vicar of Rerek's guilt:

But the Vicar, that had for this safety, so much adventured and so much cast away, looking up, swift from these strokes, into Barganax's face, stood as a man at whose feet suddenly opens the abyss. For there glared upon him out of that face not Barganax's eyes, but eyes speckled and grey: the eyes of Lessingham.

And Barganax, in a voice like a great crack of thunder, commanded them, "Take the Vicar!"

If I have shown a certain antipathy to the great Lady Fiorinda, and cannot worship at shrine of hers, I can at least pay my homage to Mary, Amalie and Antiope, in whom the divinity is veiled by a queenly but human and feminine charm. Among a whole galaxy of fair women on whom Eddison has lavished his art, the young Queen Antiope is supreme. She has a captivating innocence and candour, a fresh delight in existence, a natural warmth and pity and laughter. My eyes follow her with equal admiration as she dismounts from her horse—"a motion to convince the sea-swallow of too dull a grace"—and as, with unself-conscious assurance, she baffles her unwelcome suitor Derxis. And when she comes, through bewilderment, to realize her oneness with Aphrodite, she does so with a sweet seriousness, which has in it nothing of Fiorinda's supercilious amusement or pride.

Two of the ladies are nymphs, immortals of Aphrodite's train: Anthea of a "cold classic beauty", with fierce mouth and fiery eyes, who can assume when she pleases her other shape of a lynx; and Cam-paspe, with eyes "beady, like some shy creature's of the fields or woods", slipping off at will her woman's form and appearing in a trice as water-rat or peggy whitethroat. These two are in constant attendance on the learned Doctor Vandermast, most lovable of the male characters, whose strange discourse—quoted early in this essay—so disturbs Lessingham that he questions whether he be "devil or demigod or old drivelling disard". Enough that his existence is beyond dispute, and that he is a servant of the goddess, using his magic art for her pleasure. But, more than magician, he is a philosopher, meditating on the divine nature and, in the light of divinity, on the substance and shadow of things that endure and pass. He is clothed with so wise a serenity that students of Spinoza will forgive him for any dubious application of that master's words. In appearance he is "spare of build as a dragon-fly, all eyes and leanness", but we see him transfigured by Fiorinda's presence:

Every line and thought-driven furrow, the wrinkled hollows of his eye-sockets, their bristling caves, the lean beaked nose of him, and white beard, were as lighted with her beauty from withinward; and

the peace of her beauty lay upon the fragile and vein-streaked smoothness of his brow, and all his countenance was made gracious with the holy spirit and power of that lady's beauty, which stirred now and glittered in the depths of his swift and piercing eyes.

I have said something of Lessingham and Borganax. Against these men, both of a pagan nobility, stands out in solid relief the Lord Horius Parry, Vicar of Rerek. Here in my judgment is Eddison's masterpiece, a villain of grand Elizabethan stature, and I propose to conclude by presenting him in a closer study. His face has "a singularity of brutish violence joined with some nobler element in a marriage wherein neither was ever all subdued to other, nor yet ever all distinct; so that divorce must needs have crippled a little both, as well the good as the bad". His appearance is described as follows:

He was a huge, heavy, ugly man, nigh about fifty years of age, not tall as beside tall men, but great-thewed and broad of chest and shoulder, his neck as thick as a common man's thigh, his skin fair and full of freckons, his hair fiery red, stiff like wires and growing far down his neck behind; he wore it trimmed short, and it had this quality that it stood upright on his head like a savage dog's if he was angry. His ears were strangely small and fine shaped, but set low; his jaw great and wide; his mouth wide with pale thin lips; his nose jutting forth with mighty side-pitched nostrils, and high and spreading in the wings; his forehead high-domed, smooth and broad, and with a kind of noble serenity that sorted oddly with the ruffianly lines of his nose and jaw; his beard and mustachios close-trimmed and bristly; his eyebrows sparse; his eyelids heavy not deep set. He had delicate lively hazel eyes, like the eyes of an adder.

Befitting his person, he is a man of enormous physical energy, with equal gusto for the pleasures of the table and the life of action. While he governs by fear, he is a capable ruler with a quick instinct for men and situations. He has his moments of cordial and friendly impulse, but round the corner suspicion and craft are always laired in ambush. He cannot endure to be quiet for long, and is too restless in intrigue ever to let well alone. As for crime, he will stop at nothing. Sometimes his treachery is long and carefully planned; sometimes, at a moment of crisis, it will break out suddenly against his own associates, as it does finally against his most faithful servant and shadow, Gabriel Flores. He thinks light of murder, sometimes doing it ferociously by his own hand, and sometimes employing four deaf mutes in his "hidden slaying-place in Laimak". This formidable being has an irresistible attraction for his noble cousin

Lessingham, while he on his side, even when plotting Lessingham's death, is constrained to admit "a kind of love for the man". Part of the attraction is simple enough, for the Vicar supplies that constant element of danger which the adventurer demands. Moreover, he can be excellent company, with a boisterous humour and homely directness of speech. Lessingham and he are allies in war, and Lessingham has laid before him a plan differing widely from his own:

"We'll sleep on't," he said. "The more spacious that the tennis-court is, the more large is the hazard. And if you think, cousin, to thrust all this down my pudding-house at a gob, well, the Devil eat your soul for me, then, for you are sadly mistook."

The bond is too deep, however, to have its root in externals. And it is equally strong between the Vicar and an even more exalted person, King Mezentius, who is the central figure in the *Fish Dinner*. After the Vicar has conspired against the king and then, to save himself, has helped in the slaying of his fellow-conspirators, the king is able to say, "there's something so glues me and you together as neither life nor death shall unglue us." The key to this strange declaration lies in the words with which Mezentius dismisses the dead conspirators, "Such men, alive or dead, lack substantial being: are a kind of nothing." In them evil is a mere negative thing, a defect, while in the Vicar it is much more terrible. It is positive and vital, as evil can only be when interlaced with good. Good and evil, "two twins cleaving together," in Milton's phrase: there lies the secret of the Vicar's power, and there lies the birthbond that "glues" him to his noble antagonists.

The Vicar is certainly no ruined archangel, for there is no gleam of the divine about him. But further, there is very little that is distinctively human, apart from a full self-consciousness that hardly operates above the sensual level. Nobility is there, but it is the nobility of the animal, the ferocity of the lion and the cunning of the snake, and these can still be noble because they retain so much animal purity. There is something bestial even in "his great stubbed finger", and he is frequently described by his animal likeness—he sits "bull-like and erect in an inscrutability as of hewn granite", or his neck swells "like a puff-adder's". The tension within the Vicar is that between the human at its lowest level and the animal in its full development: much of what is evil in him as man is natural and good in him as animal. The wider tension between the Vicar and now Lessingham, now Mezentius, is essentially that between the savage and man in his proper stature.

The Vicar, on his first appearance in *Mistress of Mistresses*, is washing his great dogs, "bushy-tailed prick-eared heavy-chested long-fanged slaver-mouthed beasts," and he deals with them like a super-dog himself:

"Pyewacket! Satan's lightnings blast the bitch! Woo't come when th art called?" He hurled the heavy scrubbing-brush at a brindled shadowy form that stole away in hoped obscurity: a yelp told that his aim was true. The great beast, her tail between her legs, trotted away; he shouted to her again; she glanced back, a harried reproachful glance, and trotted faster; the Vicar was upon her with a lion-like agility; he kicked her; she laid back her ears, snarled, and snapped at his leg; he caught her by the neck and beat her with his fist about the ribs and buttocks till she yelped for pain; when he had done she growled and bared her teeth; he beat her once more, harder, then waited to see what she would do. She gave in, and walked, but with no good grace, to the distasteful bath. There, standing shoulder-deep in the steaming suds, grown thin to look on beyond nature, and very pathetic, with the water's soaking of her hair and making it cling close to the skin, she suffered sulkily the indignities of soap and brush, and the searching erudite fingers that (greatly indeed for her good) sought out and slew the ticks that here and there beset her. All the while her staring eyes were sullen with bottled-up anger, like a bull's. The Vicar's eyes had the like look in them.

A few minutes later his animal fury flames out against Lessingham, and, after he has been worsted in wrestling, it is all in character that he should *bark* out a great laugh as he holds his hand out to the victor; equally in character that, like a beast shifting his eye from the human gaze, he should be "ill at ease under Lessingham's secure and disturbing smile".

Zimiamvia is a world that suits the Vicar, as it suits the other principal characters. But while for them it is a world rich in diverse layers, moving upwards from voluptuous pleasure and fierce action to ideal beauty and high speculation, for the Vicar it is sufficient in a one-level simplicity. "Why, as for worlds, this world fits: I ask no other. A world where the best man beareth away the victory. Wine, women, war: nay, I rate it fit enough." The rarer world which the others see and to which he is blind is itself limited, for it is essentially human even in its visitings from the divine. Lessingham is no more than the "high-souled" man of Aristotelian ethics and, in spite of his grandeur, has a certain coldness and lack of reach native to that ideal. This limitation is of high value for Lessingham's relation to the Vicar; for the latter, massive though he be,

is not of such stuff as to bear conflict with the divine, and to him even the borderland of divinity can have no meaning.

No conflict with the divine, and yet a value of contrast, as a figure may have at the base of a pyramid. The Vicar is one of the participants in the great symposium of the *Fish Dinner* where, over a board laden with sumptuous fare, the nature of time and creation, of ideal worlds and divine omnipotence, is discussed and in some manner put to demonstration, in chapters of a curious and sustained magnificence. What is the Vicar to make of divine philosophy? What is he to understand when Aphrodite speaks through the lips of Fiorinda?

"Seeing I am She, I will be content with no outward shows. The wine of our loving-cup shall be the chosen butt of the chosen vintage. . . . One world shall not be enough for me. Nor one in a lifetime. No, nor one in a day. Aeons of unremembered ages shall go to the making of the crumb I brush from my dress upon rising from board. Generations of mankind, innumerable as the generations of the may-fly through a hundred years, shall live and die to no purpose but to merry my senses for five minutes, if I affect for pastime before my looking-glass to untwine my tressed hair. The slow mutations of the immemorial rocks of the ancient earth shall be but for the making ready of a soft cushion of turf for me upon some hill-side, in case the fancy should one day take me there to recline myself after my walking in the mountains. . . . Because of me, not Troy nor not this world only, but even the whole wide universe and giant mass of things to come at large, shall be cast away, abolished, and forgot."

The Vicar is red with furious feasting, he guzzles down his wine: he, for whom one world is enough, will be the sport of no Olympian. When the talk in one of its highest moments pierces beyond Olympus, and suggests that God in his all-experience might choose to know suffering in his own person, he is scandalized and holds it "plain blasphemy". The prospect of other worlds is unfolded: he sits an outsider at the feast, admirably faithful to the only reality that he knows:

There fell a silence: in the midst of it, the Vicar with his teeth cracking of a lobster's claw.

V

PALGRAVE'S GOLDEN TREASURY

by COLIN J. HORNE

It was Palgrave's intention to bring together in the *Golden Treasury* the best songs and lyrics of our language "in a form suitable for reading at all times and in all places". In that endeavour he has been admirably successful. Since its appearance in 1861 it has gone through innumerable editions and its popularity has scarcely declined to-day. No book so often used in the classroom is so well beloved outside it, and its influence on the poetic taste of several generations has been incalculable.

In the circumstances of his life and education Francis Turner Palgrave was representative of the best features of Victorian culture as it appeared among the professional and upper middle classes. The *Golden Treasury* worthily exhibits and transmits that taste. It is also the monument to Palgrave's active endeavour to disseminate more widely the culture of the privileged few and to lead his countrymen towards that joy in the best creations of the divine and human spirit that irradiated the whole of his own life. Matthew Arnold had been his friend at Balliol and was his colleague in the education department of the Privy Council, and like Arnold, though more gently, Palgrave sought to convert the Philistine and to enlighten the newly literate masses. Education through literature was to provide the means. "It may be questioned", wrote Churton Collins, who knew him well, "whether, after Arnold, any other critic of our time contributed so much to educate public taste where in this country it most needs education."

The anthology by which he most influenced the public taste was the natural issue of his love for the poetry of his country, the love of a scholar well versed in the classics and in modern literatures. The occasion that actually set him to work on it was a walking excursion in Cornwall and the Scilly Isles undertaken with Tennyson in the summer of 1860. Tennyson he had known since 1849 and the acquaintance, though Palgrave was fifteen years the younger, had developed into a ripe intercourse, with a mutual admiration that on Palgrave's side came near to

adoration. With Tennyson's encouragement (the highest sanction he could desire) Palgrave went ahead enthusiastically with his project for a lyric anthology. Immediately on his return to London in October, he set about the preparations, putting in two or three hours each day, and systematically reading twice through "Chalmers' vast collection [of British Poets], with the whole works of all accessible poets not contained in it, and the best Anthologies of different periods". What these other sources were can be ascertained from Palgrave's pencilled notes on the MS. of the *Golden Treasury*, now preserved in the British Museum.¹

In addition to Chalmers he fully combed the twenty-nine volumes of Bell's *Annotated English Poets*, recently published, 1854-7. These were supplemented by the volumes of various sixteenth and seventeenth century poets that had been edited, not very satisfactorily, by Brydges and Singer. Some of the rarer and most pleasing pieces he found in previous anthologies, especially where they were available in early nineteenth century reprints. For the lyrics of the sixteenth century four contemporary collections proved indispensable, though, as he laments, still not easily accessible even in Brydges's editions. These were *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557), *The Paradyse of Daynty Devises* (1576), *England's Helicon* (1600) and *A Poetical Rapsody* (1602-21). For the second Book, presenting the seventeenth century, it is surprising to find how many lyrics he garnered from Chambers's *Cyclopædia of English Literature* in the absence of more scholarly texts. Other sources are what one might expect: Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Poets*, Campbell's *Specimens of the British Poets*, the various anthologies in which Ritson had so ably preceded him, Percy's *Reliques* and, of course, Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. After such extensive researches, all of which must have been accomplished within a few months, he could justifiably claim that he had become "familiar with much of the most beautiful English poetry hitherto but little known to him". His pleasurable labours, moreover, were conducted with a fine critical discrimination and a comprehensive grasp of the progress of English poetry from the days of Chaucer. The *Golden Treasury* had its critical counterpart in the article on "The Growth of English Poetry" that he contributed shortly afterwards to *The Quarterly Review* for October, 1861.

Essentially a modest man, he had not relied solely on his own judgment. As he made his draft selection, large numbers of poems were read over "in courts of poetry" to his friends George Miller (like himself

¹ Add. MS. 42126.

a former Fellow of Exeter College and now his colleague at the Education Office) and Thomas Woolner, the sculptor, that he might have the benefit of their opinion. During the whole process he had before him as monitor his knowledge of Tennyson's taste and preference, and, for certainty, a penultimate selection was submitted for the revered laureate's judgment: "The mass thus diminished, but retaining all that stood near admission," he records in the MS., "was gone through by Alfr. Tennyson during ten days at Xmas 60 at Farringford. He read almost everything twice over, generally aloud to me."

It is to be noted how much importance was attached at each stage to the test of reading aloud. The lyric by its very nature must be suitable for oral performance, and the selecting by this method has surely contributed to the success of the *Golden Treasury*. It contains the poems that we most often repeat to ourselves, poems indeed that come readily to the tongue.

The volume as sent to the printer in May, 1861, had Tennyson's full approval. Palgrave was proud to advertise that it fairly represented Tennyson's taste; supplemented by the comments in the MS. it gives us a valuable index to his judgment in poetry. Tennyson's adherence to poems in the great tradition of English poetry, even his preferring Keats to Shelley, is not unexpected. Shelley's "Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples" seemed to his more robust nature "fanciful and morbid, and weak in many lines—and also unintelligible". More surprising is the evidence that he had a discriminating appreciation, often amounting to enthusiasm, for much of the minor poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ That no technical detail could escape his critical scrutiny is also confirmed from this source. He disapproved the "sad hyperbole" in the second stanza of "Drink to me only" and in the refrain of "Cherry Ripe". Confidence in his own judgment on the minutiae of poetic technique was so complete as to cause some embarrassment to Palgrave in his editorial work. Tennyson frequently desired to alter words and phrases to make the selections conform with what he would himself have written; he wished even that he "could have Tom Campbell and Burns in the room just to point out a few such slight blemishes", serenely believing that "they would have corrected them in a moment".

Deferential as Palgrave was, Tennyson did not always get his way

¹ For other details from the MS. see B. Ifor Evans's "Tennyson and the Origin of the *Golden Treasury*" in *Times Literary Supplement* for 8 December, 1932.

and the *Golden Treasury* remains substantially the work of Palgrave. It was born of his enthusiasm for the literature he loved, and its longevity is due to his healthy siring. Tennyson was the approving godfather. It shows that Palgrave had a breadth and generosity of taste not inferior to Tennyson's, and a knowledge of poetry possibly more extensive than his. In judging its merits we must not ignore the deliberate limits that he set to his choice: it was to contain all the best lyrics in the language, only the best, and none but lyrics. The lyric, he notes, is a form not easy to define, though he makes a good shot at it in his Preface:

Lyrical has been here held essentially to imply that each Poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation. In accordance with this, narrative, descriptive, and didactic poems,—unless accompanied by rapidity of movement, brevity, and the colouring of human passion,—have been excluded. Humorous poetry, except in the very unfrequent instances where a truly poetical tone pervades the whole, with what is strictly personal, occasional, and religious, has been considered foreign to the idea of the book. Blank verse and the ten-syllable couplet, with all pieces markedly dramatic, have been rejected as alien from what is commonly understood by Song, and rarely conforming to Lyrical conditions in treatment.

Whether or not his definition satisfies the student of literary forms (it is difficult to produce a better one), Palgrave himself knew well enough what he was after, and the result is a remarkable exhibition of the moods and moulds of the English genius for poetic song. There was the welcome inclusion of poems at least as much narrative as lyrical, poems like Campbell's stirring ballads of love and war, "Lord Ullin's Daughter", "The Battle of the Baltic" and "Hohenlinden"; and other pieces with the mellowness of "old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago", Southey's "After Blenheim" and Wolfe's "Burial of Sir John Moore", this last a discerning choice from an otherwise negligible writer. And how right he is about them all. He makes us recognize that the events these poems commemorate are fixed in our memories because of the lyrical intensity with which they are presented. They are genuinely patriotic songs, the new mould for the communal urges that once found voice in the old ballads. In fact the anthology is so permanently good because Palgrave's admirable powers of selection are lovingly employed over a large field of literature that does not exclude the poetry with a plain human appeal.

The form and the proportions of the collection were of his own devising and so right do they seem that one is tempted to hail them, not

simply as a triumph of talent and taste, but as a work of genius. No living poets were included. This was not Palgrave's original intention, for he would have liked to make Tennyson, after Wordsworth, the crown of the collection. This Tennyson forbade from a sense of modesty (perhaps equally from a fear of embarrassment), barring all his own poems from the collection. Palgrave then did the tactful thing in excluding all authors later than Samuel Rogers, who had recently died in 1855. Thus in effect all Victorian poets were excluded, for the long-lived Rogers was the last survivor from the Romantic period, with the exception of Landor only. The limits of his choice are, then, the late sixteenth century at one end and the Romantics of the early nineteenth century at the other. No medieval lyrics were included, the only pre-Elizabethan poems being two of Wyatt's most tuneful lyrics, "And wilt thou leave me thus" and "Forget not yet the tried intent", and about the former of these at least, all the selectors were half-hearted, considering it "too slight by far".

Within these limits the division into four Books or periods, to 1616, 1616-1700, 1700-1800, 1800-50, does well enough, though the relative proportions may excite some comment. Book IV, covering much the shortest period (in effect only the first thirty years of the nineteenth century), nevertheless dominates the whole volume and occupies well over a third of it. It was not simply that the Romantics, being most consistently at their best in lyric writing, offered most material to choose from. Palgrave vastly admired their work, considering that period the finest flower of English poetry and his own age a ripe autumn after it: "the Nation which, after the Greeks in their glory, has been the most gifted of all nations for Poetry, expressed in these men the highest strength and prodigality of its nature". In each section are to be found the poets we expect and wish to find there, with a few significant exceptions to be remarked on shortly. That is well enough. The wonder arises from the large number of lesser writers that he has managed to exhibit so favourably in so small a room, people like Barnfield, Colley Cibber, Jane Elliott, Graham, Logan, etc.: a reference to the index will show their number and variety. One's affection for the *Golden Treasury* arises not least from the fact that some of the most pleasing lyrics in it, such as Mrs. Barbauld's "Life! I know not what thou art" (chosen, incidentally, by Tennyson), are culled from writers not otherwise known to the common reader of our day, and writers who often achieved nothing else worthy of survival. For when he gets away from the big figures like Wordsworth, it is the poetry alone that matters to Palgrave, and he

has an unerring faculty for finding the good thing, however unusual, even under accumulations of much rubbish.

The first Book is richly representative of Elizabethan love lyrics and sonnets, revealing in the best light the pretty delicacy of their conceits and yet fairly conveying the range of Elizabethan lyricism that Palgrave remarks in his accompanying note. Even lyrics with a cynical tendency, so contrary to his own uncomplicated nature, are not banned, though he reluctantly omitted Spenser's "Epithalamion" because he considered its tone to be "too high-kilted" for a generation brought up in the straiter morality of his own age. He was not himself given to such prudery and contemplated a separate volume of poems of a kind which he archly designates as "decidedly amorous". Unfortunately it never appeared.

Shakespeare's songs and sonnets rightly dominate this first Book with thirty-two (later thirty-four) appearances. Its novelty is in the prominence given to Drummond of Hawthornden, a writer whom he couples with Shakespeare for his "spirit of sterner reflection". Yet perhaps Drummond was not such a novelty, for this same moral quality had recommended him to eighteenth century readers, though in a badly tinkered text. Indirectly the *Golden Treasury* demonstrates the importance for Elizabethan studies of the work of later nineteenth century editors. The original sixty-one pieces in the first Book were in later editions increased by Palgrave to eighty-four when he had the Elizabethan collections of Arber, Bullen, Grosart and Hannah to draw upon. All of these were published later than the original *Golden Treasury* and he had perhaps himself given some impetus to this rapidly developing enthusiasm for Elizabethan verse. His own restricted knowledge of it when he began his collection is some proof that the earlier enthusiasm of the eighteenth century revival of the Elizabethans had considerably faded by 1860. He had then not been well acquainted with the lyrics of Sidney and Campion, giving only one sample from each. Later he added four more from Grosart's editions of Sidney (1873 and 1877) and as many as nine more from Bullen's edition of Campion (1889).

These additions having been made, the modern reader can carp only at the entire neglect of Donne. Even the single piece inserted later is now rejected from the Donne canon and assigned to John Hoskins. The religious poems, it is true, were precluded by Palgrave's design for the collection and four of them appeared separately in his *Treasury of Sacred Song*. Certainly many of Donne's love poems are "high-kilted", but others like "A Valediction forbidding Mourning", admired by

Tennyson, would have been sufficiently decorous for reading, even in Victorian homes. This is an interesting reminder that the recovery of Donne's fame, despite Grosart's edition of 1872, came about slowly and that it was largely left to our own age to restore him to the powerful eminence he had once held. For Palgrave and his readers Donne was no doubt to be included among the poets that he rejects as showing "more thought than mastery in expression".

Like Shakespeare in the first Book, Milton presides over the second. Dryden of course was not essentially a lyric poet and Palgrave sees fit only to include his two elaborate orchestral odes, "Song for Saint Cecilia's Day" and "Alexander's Feast", overlooking the plainer merits of the songs that Dryden wrote for the stage. For the same reasons that kept Donne out, the significant "metaphysical" strain of seventeenth century verse at first scarcely appears, Palgrave preferring the more traditional and certainly simpler beauties of Herrick. Here again the enlargement of his taste, and of the taste of his age, is revealed in the later editions. Originally one piece was included from each of Cowley, Crashaw, Herbert and Vaughan, and those were of the more traditional kind. The "metaphysical" quality appeared more obviously in later editions when, with Grosart's volumes to choose from, he added lyrics by Habington and Quarles, Cowley's elegy "On the Death of Mr. William Hervey", and two more poems by Vaughan. Vaughan in fact was very well represented in the *Sacred Treasury* of 1889 with an appreciative note by Palgrave to draw the attention of readers to this "unfamiliar" poet. Of the virtues of Marvell he was aware even in 1861, though a "writer then with difficulty accessible" and remaining so until Grosart's four-volume edition appeared between 1872 and 1875. Even then Palgrave's preference was still for poems in the less involved manner of the "Song of the Emigrants in Bermuda". Tennyson, indeed, had urged him to include more of Marvell, particularly "To his Coy Mistress", but there was the usual difficulty that some of the lines were "too strong for this age".

Book III contains the smallest number of poems. The eighteenth century, of course, was not an age to be acclaimed for its lyric poetry; at any rate prejudice had set against it in Victorian times, partly because it was not lyrical, even more because it seemed at this later date to be overshadowed by the intervening bulk and brilliance of the Romantics. From that prejudice Palgrave was singularly free. He had a large sense of the merits of eighteenth century poets and took a juster view of them than did Matthew Arnold. His notes on the period, where he

lifts his eyes from the search for lyrics to gaze across the whole century, are a model of temperate but discerning criticism; there is little in them that can be rejected even now and much of which it is well to be reminded. Critics of his own day are rebuked for finding these poets tame, artificial and lacking in originality; to the contrary he emphasizes their diversities of aim and the great varieties in their style. To this end he added in a later edition three stanzas of Christopher Smart's "Song of David", picked out, as he said, from "that wild rhapsody of mingled grandeur, tenderness, and obscurity". Gray is the prevailing poet in the Book and after him Burns, for his songs, is the most generously recognized. Cowper is hardly less admired, though until "The Castaway" was later added, the distressing side of his genius that appears in his anguished poems of deep spiritual suffering was avoided.

The complete omission of Blake, both here and in Book IV, has often been remarked upon. This neglect seems all the more surprising when we learn that "The strange but beautiful designs of the then little-known William Blake had early begun to fascinate him". From his earliest years he had imbibed a love of art from his mother and when at Balliol Jowett introduced him to the "Illustrations of the Book of Job" he became an immediate admirer and was one of the first, as his daughter records, to "preach" Blake. From the engravings he found his way to the poems:

Even somewhat higher still did he rank him as a poet, perceiving the same qualities in his verse as in his art: the "simple yet often majestic imagination, spiritual insight, profound feeling for grace and colour . . . whatever he writes, his eye is always straight upon his subject".¹

This must have been at a later date. When the *Golden Treasury* was published in 1861 there were scarcely any but the rare original editions of Blake's poems in existence. Ultimately he was to possess many of the original drawings and engravings, but it was almost certainly to Rossetti's edition of 1874, and in a lesser degree to Gilchrist's *Life*, that he was indebted for his knowledge of the poetry. Thereupon he made amends to "this singularly attractive poet" by including him in the *Sacred Treasury* and adding four of his lyrics to the *Golden Treasury*, the one "To the Muses" being placed at the head of the fourth Book.

¹ G. F. Palgrave, *Francis Turner Palgrave. His Journals and Memories of his Life*, 1899. Pp. 26-7.

Characteristically it was the note of innocence that he best understood in Blake.

We have seen that the collection culminates in the fourth Book, whose wide expanse Wordsworth rules as his demesne. Even after Tennyson had pared the selection, forty-one pieces of Wordsworth's remained. Against all other objectors to this disproportion, Palgrave stood firm and had at last the satisfaction of knowing, according to Dean Boyle, "that a taste for Wordsworth's poetry had been revived by his judicious selections". If this statement fairly represents the facts, we must revise the generally held opinion that the revival was brought about by Arnold's advocacy of Wordsworth, particularly by his volume of selections in 1879. The *Golden Treasury* had appeared eighteen years earlier and had been followed up by Palgrave's own anthology of Wordsworth in 1865. It was not in Wordsworth's poetry alone that he found the Romantic period so glorious. To appreciate the perfection of these poets appeared to him "no doubtful step in the higher education of the soul".

The *Golden Treasury* is an important document for the history of English studies and it did much (much more than Palgrave had dared to hope) towards educating the public taste in English poetry. At a time when his official work in the Education Office was directed towards evolving a democratic system of education, Palgrave's anthology had untold influence, not only making much of what is best in English poetry more widely known than ever before, but presenting it in a form that was to be admirably suitable for the needs of the new education, in which the native literature was to be a more active element than ever before. This was not unintended. Earlier in his career he had been for five years, as Vice-Principal of Kneller Hall, engaged in the training of teachers for the new elementary schools. The publisher Macmillan had this same end in mind when he struck out the Greek mottoes prefixed to each Book, fearing that by giving the volume too learned an appearance they might frighten away the ordinary reader for whom it was intended.

There is only one reservation to be made about its educational value. By excluding or only slightly representing more knotty and "difficult" poets like Donne and his successors; by at first passing over Blake, so that he appears only in the later copyright editions; most of all by emphasizing nature poetry, especially the Wordsworthian kind, Palgrave has unintentionally directed taste away from the less sweet but tougher kind of poetry that has influenced poets in our own day. And further,

because he confined his choice to lyrical poetry (as he had every right to do), many readers for whom his collection has been the key to poetry have come to think of lyric as the only poetry *par excellence*. Under this influence they have by contrast tended to slight the satirical and social verse of a Pope on the one side, and to recoil from the hard, irreverent poetry of a less rapturous modern age on the other.

But this, after all, is an unintentional result for which Palgrave is only partly responsible. There is far more reason for acclaiming his positive achievement in a work that remains, in the words of Mackail,

one of those rare instances in which critical work has a substantive imaginative value, and entitles its author to rank among creative artists.

That imaginative power is evinced above all by his disposition of the poems in what he considered "the most poetically-effective order". The secret of that power is not easily analysed, not at any rate in the space available here. Yet every reader devoted to the *Golden Treasury* will acknowledge it. Arranging these lyrics "in gradations of feeling and subject", Palgrave has brightened their lustre by his own highly sensitive setting of them. His dedication to Tennyson expressed the hope that the *Golden Treasury* might be

found by many a lifelong fountain of innocent and exalted pleasure; a source of animation to friends when they meet; and able to sweeten solitude itself with best society,—with the companionship of the wise and the good, with the beauty which the eye cannot see, and the music only heard in silence.

That hope has been fulfilled with a completeness that falls to the lot of only a few great books in any language.

VI

YOU MIGHT HAVE RIMED

by E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

A GOOD poem may be likened to an ancient ecclesiastical perquisite called a ship, that is to say a small ship-shaped censer, that contained the embers into which incense was cast during Mass, and, swung rapidly by a chain or cord, rekindled the dying cinders, forcing their fragrance into every corner of the church. It is, or it should be, a beautifully wrought thing, but unless it contains fire and fragrance, and unless there is someone who understands it and can put it in motion, so that its thuribular function is fulfilled, it may almost as well not be, or stand encased in a museum, a mere specimen of the craftsman's art, its magic, its personality and the unearthly comfort that issues from it forgotten and away.

Those of us who are concerned for the fate of the ship, concerned, that is, that there should continue to be good poems and that those already in existence should continue to diffuse their

incense sweet

From chain-swung censer teeming

again and again bestir ourselves about the mould of the vessel. This country's proudest political boast is her freedom, and her poets, still curious to "inspect the lyre" from time to time, have never been slow to assert freedom for their art. I have chosen for my heading Horatio's comment on a poetical improvisation by Hamlet, as good a poet as his creator was pleased to make him. You will remember that, when the play-scene is done and King Claudius has revealed his guilt as it was intended he should, the two friends are left together and Hamlet in his excited triumph can find adequate utterance only in lyric:

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here
A very, very—pajock.

The conventional Horatio, who expected a monosyllable to rhyme with "was" and, if another may speak for him, a noun, *ass*, a term unsuitable for Claudius, has to put up with a hypermetric rhymeless ending, in a word meant possibly for peacock, for which commentators have substituted paddock (toad) or puttock (kite). At any rate, honest fellow, he is a trifle puzzled and mildly remonstrates "You might have rimed". Hamlet's bold metrical innovation has not, so far as I know (though anything is possible) been generally applied to quatrains of eight and six, to liberate them from "the troublesom and modern bondage of Rimeing", of which Milton, the next name on my list, speaks, but I should not be surprised if one of the sterner and more intellectual of our a-metrists may not have proclaimed the Prince of Denmark a pioneer in prosody as he certainly was in protracted but holocaustic theatrical murder.

I am not going to make much of Milton's unfashionable behaviour in writing his pair of epics in blank verse because, in spite of what he says on that score, I think that his original scheme for *Paradise Lost* as a drama and his intense admiration for Shakespeare played a bigger part in the choice of a measure than he cared to tell us. At that time blank verse was the ship in most danger for want of fire and fragrance. Playwriting had got into the hands of men who troubled little, when they were not rhyming, about the sonority of the great Elizabethan and Jacobean practitioners, and this noble national measure had to be saved at all costs. The son of a musician saved it, by use as a vehicle for what was long held the noblest type of literary composition, the Epic Poem, and then resumed it again in a Sacred Drama, expressly not written for the stage, *Samson Agonistes*. So Milton, in his severe way, thought, no doubt, that he had rescued the Lady Blank Verse from harlots and buffoons, much as the two brothers had rescued the heroine in *Comus*. By the time he was writing *Samson Agonistes*, and indeed *Paradise Lost*, the Pindaric Ode, inaugurated by Cowley, had become a fashionable art-form. This, as most know, was not like Pindar at all, who wrote in regular strophes, antistrophes and epodes, but a rhymed rambling go-as-you-please rhapsody with no fixed length for its wholly irregular stanzas. Milton eschewed this chimera as sedulously as he eschewed couplets for his unmodish epics and Old Testament play, but when faced with the problem of choric metres for the latter, employed for the most part what is actually unrhymed English Pindaric and thus became the first and finest exponent of what is called "free verse" to-day. Needless to say, in John Milton's hands this freedom covered a good deal of implicit obedience to ancient prosodic law, and George Saintsbury was fond

of showing how the line "Oh how comely it is and how reviving" can be scanned either as a typical Fletcherian decasyllable with a feminine ending or as a Catullian hendecasyllable. But, not to stand too much upon short and long, the choruses in *Samson Agonistes*, which do not exclude rhyme, represent Milton's cleansing of that Augean metrical stable the seventeenth century Pindaric Ode. No writers of *vers libre* have dared one inch beyond them.

The Miltonic influence is diffused over the choruses of Glover's *Medea* (1763), which was acted at Drury Lane, and this unrhymed classicizing is well described at the close of that century by an unremembered Norfolk medical man and versifier, who, speaking of the *Samson Agonistes* choruses, opines that Milton "has certainly allowed himself great liberty in forming lines, and seems to have considered it as a sufficient imitation of his model to write in the manner which to his own ear afforded harmony of verse". Two pages later he makes the following pronouncement, surely not without importance in the history of English poetry:

It appears that the English language is not incapable of receiving forms of metre which are sufficiently harmonious without the repetition of similar sound; if the example of the poets I have mentioned were followed by others our attachment to rime might at length be diminished and variety might be introduced into our poetical compositions.

Frank Sayers' *Disquisitions, Philosophical and Literary* (1793), in which these two statements occur on pages 135 and 137 respectively, were eagerly lapped up by a young Bristolian agog with a poem on Joan of Arc and Pantisocratic schemes, with the result that in 1801 *Thalaba the Destroyer* was published and we got:

Where is the Boy for whose hand it is destined?
 Where the destroyer who one day shall wield
 The sword that is circled with fire?
 Race accursèd, try your charms!
 Masters of the mighty Spell,
 Mutter o'er your words of power!
 Ye can shatter the dwellings of man;
 Ye can open the womb of the rock;
 Ye can shake the foundations of earth,
 But not the word of God:
 But not one letter can ye change
 Of what his Will has written.

It is unnecessary to state that Milton and Glover are not wholly responsible for this type of utterance; the next citation reveals at once who is:

Now go thy way, Abdaldar!
 Servant of Eblis,
 Over Arabia
 Seek the Destroyer!
 Over the sands of the scorching Tehama,
 Over the waterless mountains of Nayd;
 In Arud pursue him, and Yemen the happy,
 And Hejaz, the country beloved by believers,
 Over Arabia
 Servant of Eblis,
 Seek the Destroyer!¹

A poem called *Temora* (in eight books), a title not very unlike *Thalaba* (in nine) had appeared in 1763, a year after *Fingal*, by

Ossian, sublimest, simplest bard of all,
 Whom English Infidels Macpherson call.

Here is a specimen, taken at random; it concludes Book VII and is here printed, as published, in two prose paragraphs:

GREEN thorn of the hill of ghosts, that shakest thy head to nightly winds! I hear no sound in thee; is there no spirit's windy skirt now rustling in thy leaves? Often are the steps of the dead, in the dark-eddying blasts; when the moon, a dun shield, from the east, is rolled along the sky.

ULLIN, Carril and Ryno, voices of the days of old! Let me hear you, while yet it is dark, to please and awake my soul—I hear you not, ye sons of song; in what hall of the clouds is your rest? Do you touch the shadowy harp, robed with morning mist, where the rustling sun comes forth from his green-headed waves?

The destroyer, in short, was to be sought beyond the Tweed, and Robert Southey, late in the day though he came, could no more help imitating the cadences of *Fingal* and *Temora* than his fellow townsman Thomas Chatterton, of whose works he was, in 1803, joint editor, could thirty-odd years before in his "Saxon" magazine-pieces *Cerdick* and *Ethelgar*. There

¹ It is perhaps not utterly fanciful to discover traces of this rhythm and locution in Meg Merrilies' famous "Ride your ways" (*Guy Mannering*, 1815). Historically Kit Smart's (1722-71) asylum-poem *Rejoice in the Lamb*, now famous because of the section on the poet's cat Jeoffrey, deserves a place along with Macpherson's *vers libre* as pioneer work and, like it, has a Biblical provenance; but it remained in manuscript till 1939, when W. Force Stead gave it to the world.

is no mention of Ossian in the preface to the fourth edition of *Thalaba the Destroyer*, but only of Dr. Sayers' dramatic sketches, "which no lover of poetry will recollect without pleasure". Now, though *Thalaba* is not without its influence, especially on the young Shelley's *Queen Mab* and its recast as *The Daemon of the World* printed in the 1816 *Alastor* volume (compare their respective openings, "How beautiful is night", "How wonderful is Death") and, perhaps rather less than the *Samson Agonistes* choruses, Arnold's classically conceived poems (e.g. *Philomela*), the person mainly responsible for free verse as we know it to-day, *pace* that Victorian best-seller, Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* which Uncle Sam took to his heart (1838-76), is, though he did not divide it up into lines, Ossian or James Macpherson in his publications of 1760, 1762 and 1763. These had, incidentally, a great influence in France, not merely on Napoleon I, who travelled with them and pronounced Ossian "Ocean", but on the comparatively recently acknowledged founder of the surrealist movement Isidore Ducasse (*Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869) and the important little book *Gaspard de la Nuit*, by Louis Bertrand (1842) that led to the Baudelairean prose-poem and so to Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations*, Pierre Louys' *Les Chansons de Bilitis* and much else. Of their effect in Germany it is enough to mention Goethe, who quotes some of "The Songs of Selma" in *Werther* (1774).

I resist the inclination to cite specimens of modern free verse (which, I understand, has passed its climacteric) illustrating (a) caprice, as in Hamlet's case; (b) the effect of the caption, derivable from advertisements and, ultimately from Tupper, it may be; and (c) the rhetorical, spasmodic or staccato manner, more noticeable in free verse, thanks to typographic lay-out, than in any style of composition. Nor will I dwell long on the phenomenon of semi-rhyming, as in a poem where *vainly* is coupled with *finely* and *delight* with *elate*, because this type of variation, first, I think, brought into prominence by Wilfred Owen towards the end of the Four Years' War, is only (and the assonance-rhyme, too) a new kind of binding of words at the end of regular lines and in no sense a freeing of them. In fact it is, rather, a closer binding, because it at once sends a sensitive ear hunting for what *would have been* an exact rhyme. But, putting all this on one side, I find in the free verse examples of James Macpherson (1736-96), all produced between the age of twenty-four and twenty-eight and printed as prose, the *fons et origo* of the art, anticipating even its most famous exponent, Whitman, in the use of hexameter cadences, as witness the conclusion of *Fingal*, "We rose on the wave with songs, and rushed with joy, through the foam of the

ocean." If you leave out "we" and "with joy", you will see that the line is a hexameter: "Rose on the wave with songs, and rushed through the foam of the ocean." This, no doubt, was deliberate, as Macpherson was serving up what he called "an ancient epic poem" and the more Homeric suggestion he got into these supposed translations from the Gaelic the more pleased his learned Scottish patrons would be. Rightly, therefore, in *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (1912, p. 470) Saintsbury remarked that *Ossian*, at least, was "an attempt much rather at a new kind of verse than at a special kind of prose."

James Macpherson was a rogue, admittedly, and deserves all the hard things Samuel Johnson, who lies not far from him in Poets' Corner, said of him, unscrupulous *arriviste*, who based a body of modern Scottish poetry on a small nucleus of genuine Irish poetry that he most shamefully asserted to have been imitated from his fabrications. In claiming this man, who was certainly the originator of the Celtic Twilight movement and has been echoed by Yeats and Synge and William Sharp ("Fiona Macleod")—did he not compose the first *Deirdre* (*Dar-thula*) in English?—this intrepid falsifying Scot with something of a true poet's vision, as the founder of modern free verse, I am not forgetting the English of the Authorized Version (1611). *The Song of Songs*, in particular, affords a perfect model for an unrhymed romantic love-poem, and that did not escape our eighteenth-century pioneer. The lament, too, for Saul and Jonathan and the song of Deborah have epic value and were not overlooked either, as anyone can see who troubles to read Macpherson's footnotes, which so often reveal where he has gone for his matter.

Now consider! With the advent of Rousseau and the conception of the noble savage, a species of composition fabricated in Scotland, this romantic loose-limbed free verse of Macpherson with its partiality for rocks, moonlight and spectres, storms over moorland, fainting females, floating hair and outstretched arms, passionate warriors and the old blind bard Ossian, singer of melodramatic would-be-Homeric heroism, takes Europe by storm and so confuses the continental mind that we find Schopenhauer, of whom more presently, actually contrasting Byron (whose romantic sentiment, in *Childe Harold* is Macphersonesque, though the prosody is Spenserian, seen through the eyes of Pope and Thomson), as a young poet with Homer and Ossian as old men.¹ "In the young man," he writes, "all perception chiefly feeling and mood, and even mingles with it, as Byron beautifully expresses:

¹ *The World as Will and Idea* (tr. Haldane and Kemp) Book III, 51.

I live not in myself, but I become
 Portion of that around me, and to me
 High mountains are a feeling.

This is why the youth clings so closely to the perceptible and outward side of things; this is why he is only fit for lyrical poetry, and only the full-grown man is capable of the drama. The old man we can think of as at the most an epic poet, like Ossian, and Homer, for narration is characteristic of old age."

With these words, *circa* 1818, and under this august sponsorship, strange as it may seem, free verse may be said to have ratified its triumphant progress through Europe, not always obviously and certainly unassisted by literary historians. Essentially (leaving the Bible out of account) a Scottish growth, a malversation of Irish legendary metrical matter to enhance the supposed ancient glories of Caledonia, starting into life under the Bute Ministry of the early 1760's, its ramifications are ubiquitous and surprising. William Beckford is reading *Fingal*, as he writes to his painter friend Alexander Cozens, so we get *A Vision*, not to say *Vathek*, and from the prose of the young Beckford to that of the young Disraeli there is but one step. Wilde (did he not rejoice in the names Oscar and Fingal?) writes *Salomé* in French, with Maeterlinck and Flaubert's *Hérodiade* not far away (*Vathek*, too, was written in French), but its cadences hail from Badenoch, and the locutions of Wilde's fairytales are nearer Ossian than Andersen. "But," you will say, "these are prose works." Well, when Whitman sings his *Pioneers*, Pound his *Mauberry* and Eliot his *Prufrock*, each, in his individual way, re-echoes the "ancient epic poems" that were "translated in obedience to the commands" of the Scottish peer who gave Johnson his pension. None the worse for that, no doubt, they fall into line with Blake's "Prophetic Books" (Blake would never have used so uncouth a word as Oothoon but for Macpherson's *Oithona*). Still, for all their "freedom" and provenance from the New World, they betray their ancestry to the reader with a prosodic ear, as do the hexameters of *Evangeline* (1847).

From Macpherson's time till, roughly, the beginning of the last war but one nobody troubled about the distinction between "traditional" and "free" verse except perhaps the professional prosodist, though plenty of work was appearing in either medium; but, with the growth of advertisement and the caption and the continued incursion of journalism and politics into the fine arts, not to speak of the cinema "shot", it stood to reason that a form of poetry that appealed primarily to the eye—I mean in its appearance on the printed page—and was nearer akin

to an electoral address than the old rhymed and blank-verse sort, would gain in popularity, with the great example of Whitman behind it, whose work is as specifically American, in its virtues and vices, as Macpherson's is Caledonian. Indeed, you need only go back to *Piers Plowman* to see how much better an unrhymed scheme lends itself to political and propaganda poetry than that with a tagged ending; nor does it affect this particular argument if you regard Langland's theme as a *religious* one. But latterly an idea has got abroad that the exponents of formal verse, except in satire, which has a conventional lien on the couplet, are deliberately fighting shy of contemporary issues and ensconcing themselves in an ivory tower. Perhaps—and I should be glad to think this—I am speaking of an already demoded line of thought. At least some of us are aware on how false a basis the cavil against art for art's sake rests, if that doctrine be taken to imply no more than that the artist should not let anything get in his way between himself and the job in hand. So no more of this! But note how Schopenhauer again, whose general view of the function of art is admirable, but who talks queerly on points of detail, holds that rhyme is of its nature binary, its effect being limited to one single recurrence of the same sound, and is not strengthened by more frequent repetitions, a view to which few practising poets would, surely, subscribe, and a perfect example of the truth of Keats'

do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?

So, you see, a thinker who has given us a truly wonderful picture of the function of art in life, here, by reducing rhyming to a single pair of fetters, in the first quarter of the last century, virtually throws in his lot with free verse. I note this phenomenon as showing a sense of *tendency*, at an earlier stage than one might have expected in aesthetic criticism, though Schopenhauer was not anticipating latter-day formlessness and, indeed, not arguing against rhyme at all. The judgment is on a par with his bracketing Homer and Macpherson (Ossian) as old men.

The best long poem of our time is *The Testament of Beauty*. It is unrhymed. Bridges described the measure as "loose Alexandrines", as we learn from the authoritative *Times Literary Supplement* review of 24 October, 1929. It had been his original intention, so he told a friend of mine, to write it in blank verse. In its weakest moments recalling *Proverbial Philosophy*, its burden of didacticism and reverie, an unusual combination in poetry, gives it an Augustan cut, though something of the mood of *The Faerie Queene* and *The Castle of Indolence* (rhymed

allegories) shines through a texture that is, superficially only, more akin to Langland than to the body of English rhymed verse, or even to *The Prelude*. It remains true, I think, that a person who to-day had a message to deliver analogous to Pope's *Essay on Man*—I mean, was *teaching* in poetry—would say what he had to say in free verse or rhymeless quasi-Alexandrines or quasi-fourteeners rather than in rhymed couplets or blanks. But, coming to what is immediately behind us and on a miniature scale, I find that the last war has produced certainly one poem that, for freshness and beauty, may compare with, if it does not excel, in intellectual content, any produced by the Four Years' War, except perhaps Julian Grenfell's *Into Battle*. It is written in blanks with some broken lines at the start, that suit well enough the sense of loss and frustration it attempts to comfort. It follows, by permission, entire, in the belief that, to whatever school of poetry we belong, we shall have to admit that this beautifully wrought thing contains the fire and the fragrance of the censer, the ecclesiastical perquisite, to which at starting I likened a good poem. A French village gives the name to the piece, written in September, 1940, which to my thinking is finer than the maturer and more highly esteemed productions of its author, Sidney Keyes.

CERVIÈRES

Look, Aimée, and you, Victor, look—
 The birds have taken all our cherries—
 Down in the brown-walled orchard on the hillside
 The cherry-trees are weeping for their fruit;
 Only the clusters of green stalks
 Remain; the stones are scattered on the grass.
 There will be no more cherries, not this summer
 Nor next, if we get another. God!
 It's beyond bearing that they eat our cherries
 And fly away and leave the trees in mourning.
 Soon an invader will be taking more than cherries:
 They'll be stealing our dreams or breaking up
 Our history for firewood.

Children, see

The avenues of cherry-trees are broken
 And trampled boughs crawl in the dust. See, Victor,
 How the sun bouncing off the mountain strikes
 Christ's wooden throat above the cemetery:
 Flesh broken like our cherry-trees and ravished.
 The path runs open and smiling down the hill;
 It leaps the walls and hides behind the ruins.

¹ Op. cit. *On the Aesthetics of Poetry*, vol. III, p. 228.

Now take this moment and create its image
 Impregnable to time or trespasser,
 And turn your mind to realize your loss.
 The cherry-trees are broken and their fruit
 Sown on the indecipherable mountains.
 Realize your loss and take it in your hands
 And turn it like a pebble. You perceive
 It has a stone's dumb smell; its patterns
 Plot some forgotten map. Regard your loss.

Planting this lump of pain, perhaps a flower
 Might burst from it; perhaps a cherry-tree,
 Perhaps a world or a new race of men.

Regard your loss. The blossoms of the cherry
 Are rotten now; the branch is violated;
 The fruit is stolen and our dreams have failed.
 Yet somewhere—O behind what bitter ranges?—
 A seed drops from the sky and like a bomb
 Explodes into our orchard's progeny,
 And so our care may colonize a desert.
 They cannot break our trees or waste our dreams,
 For their despoiling is a kind of sowing.

Aimée and Victor, stop crying. Can't you understand
 They cannot steal our cherries or our joy?
 Let them take what they want, even our dreams.
 Somewhere our loss will plant a better orchard.¹

In these lines I can see, more than dimly, the revival of our poetry, its emancipation from its late free bondage, its return from an acid cynicism, a mealy-mouthed acquiescence and a dusty futility to a clean and happy tree-like growth. Behind the rhetoric blows, in Plato's phrase, a breeze from the best places, bringing health, and the vision is at one with the doctrine, both implicit and explicit. The children are not dragged in for the poet to preach a sermon to them; they are ourselves, and the poet is ourselves, and the whole piece has the quivering yet unimpassioned detachment of water in sunlight. Nothing unduly forced, the “picture” (for every line is a “shot”) is vital; it comes from the heart and it goes to the heart. To descend to technique: the forty-five lines are not rhymed, true; the piece is dramatic, what the Greeks might have called a mime. There is very little obvious shape about it; the first twenty lines describe the scene of loss, of outrage, and exclaim upon it; the next

¹ *The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes* (Routledge), p. 12.

twenty-one draw a lesson from it; but the children are still crying, and the last four reinforce the idea, the idea that nothing is really lost. And that, after all, is poetic form, nay, mastery.

Naturally I do not mean that all the good poems that are coming, or that I look to see coming, will be written in this manner. I look for the return of stanza, of strophe, antistrophe and epode. But form is nothing, or little enough, without content, and those two French children in Sidney Keyes' lines are reincarnations of Wordsworth's Ruth and Johnny. It is they, Aimée and Victor, that were lacking in the poetry between the two wars, and we must greet them both as fulfilment and promise, if we care for the ship at all. So we shall have our orchard again, and its fruit will not be fleshless or even carved cherry-stones, but the sweet pith and savour that all true children of the Muses love.

NOTE

Lest any think that, at starting, Shakespeare was flippantly handled as a metrical innovator, it should be added that the three correspondent blanks in Act V, Scene 4 of *Cymbeline* ("Rates and revenges", "A thing of pity", "Sweet Imogen") seem to me a real finger-post to the *Samson Agonistes* choruses, pointing farther than the classical prosody of Campion or the rhyming sapphics of Fulke Greville. See *T. L. S.*, June 22, 1922, "The Vision in *Cymbeline*".

VII

COLERIDGE'S THEORY OF THE IMAGINATION

by R. L. BRETT

ON 8th April, 1825, Coleridge wrote to his nephew, John Taylor Coleridge, refuting the suggestions which had been made that his philosophy was merely a gloss on German idealism.

I can not only honestly assert, but I can satisfactorily prove by reference to writings (Letters, Marginal Notes, and those in books that have never been in my possession since I first left England for Hamburgh, etc.) that all the elements, the *differentials*, as the algebraists say, of my present opinions existed for me before I had ever seen a book of German Metaphysics, later than Wolf and Leibnitz, or could have read it, if I had.

This only puts more forcibly what he had already written in the *Biographia Literaria*. There he expresses his admiration above all for Kant, who had seized his mind "as with a giant's hand," but who, he also tells us, had only made more explicit his own beliefs about the poetic imagination. If we take Coleridge at his word the question arises of whether there were any others who helped him to arrive at his famous distinction between the fancy and the imagination.

The occasion which gave rise to Coleridge's theory of imagination was his desire to account for the difference between the poetry and, in particular, the poetic imagery, of Wordsworth and that of the eighteenth century. This difference Coleridge felt to be so great that it could only be accounted for by a difference between the faculties responsible for each of them. His theory of imagination, however, was not something concerned merely with literary criticism. It developed from and formed part of his whole philosophical position. A good deal of the *Biographia Literaria* is taken up with a criticism of the empirical tradition in philosophy, which started in England in the seventeenth century and culminated for Coleridge in the associationism of Hartley. Coleridge's earlier admiration for Hartley, his growing disillusionment and final renunciation

of the Hartleian doctrines are now commonplaces of literary history. It is well known that his theory of the imagination was elaborated in reaction to associationism as a philosophy. Was it fashioned merely as a reaction, however, or were there positive forces which helped him to work out a more satisfactory philosophy which would (amongst other things), provide a basis for an adequate theory of art? We know that as early as the 1790's, Coleridge transferred his loyalty from Hartley to Berkeley and then to Spinoza. With neither of these was he finally satisfied, however, and according to Southey, he turned to Plato as his disagreement with Hartley's philosophy deepened.

Hartley was ousted by Berkeley, Berkeley by Spinoza, Spinoza by Plato.¹

The study of Plato would also seem to have included neo-Platonism and that Platonic tradition in English thought which existed before the establishment of Locke's "new way of ideas."

Coleridge disliked associationism because it gave a mechanical account of reality. It turned nature into a lifeless collection of atoms, organised according to the laws of motion. Even worse, for poetry, it attempted to explain the human mind in terms of mechanical causation. In December, 1794, Coleridge had written to Southey,

I am a complete necessitarian, and understand the subject as well almost as Hartley himself, but I go further than Hartley, and believe the corporeality of *thought*, namely, that it is motion.

By March, 1801, a complete change had occurred and in a letter to Thomas Poole, we find him opposing not only associationism, but the whole empirical tradition in philosophy. He concludes by castigating Newton for trying to account for the processes of the human mind in terms of physical science.

Newton was a mere materialist. *Mind*, in his system, is always *passive*—a lazy *Looker-on* on an external world. If the mind be not *passive*, if it be indeed made in God's Image, and that, too, in the sublimest sense, the *Image of the Creator*, there is ground for suspicion that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system.

This revolt against associationism was essentially a revolt against the conception of the mind as a passive recipient of ideas. His theory of the

¹ Quoted by J. D. Campbell in his *Life of Coleridge*.

imagination is based on an account of perception which differs radically from the associationist one.¹ He insists that perception is more than what is given to the human mind by sensation. In perceiving an object the human mind receives from the senses data such as colour, shape, tactual qualities, and sometimes taste and smell. The associationists had contended that perception is merely the sum of such sense-data, but Coleridge says that these alone would never bring about our perception of an object. To make perception possible there is needed an active power of the mind itself. The mind is not a passive receptacle into which the sense-data enter together, nor is it a blank screen on which the outside world reflects an image. The mind is active in perception and brings together the sense-data by a power which he calls the "primary imagination," so that they are seen as an object and not merely the sum of the constituent parts. What is received through the senses is an unordered mass of sensory material and the mind itself in perception imposes form upon this flux. This activity of the mind is akin to the divine activity in creation, whereby order came out of chaos and, as Coleridge puts it, is "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."²

This picture of the human mind as partly an architect of its own knowledge, actively operating on the material provided through the senses by the outside world, is one that many critics have attributed to Coleridge's reading of Kant. If, however, we accept his statement that the elements of his philosophy had already been worked out before he went to Germany we must look for some other inspiration. Coleridge left the West Country for Germany in 1798. We know from the records of the Bristol Library that in that year he had been reading Berkeley. Although Berkeley's philosophy was more congenial than materialism in that it believed reality was mind-dependent, its account of perception was in the main empirical, and this may explain why Coleridge's mind found no resting place there. In the later and more Platonic Berkeley, however, there was the more promising doctrine that the mind is active in knowing. This would have confirmed what Coleridge was probably coming to believe from his other reading at this time, for amongst the books which he had borrowed from the Bristol Library during the previous two years was Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*. We find that Coleridge borrowed this book from 15th May to 6th June, 1795,

¹ For a full discussion of this subject, see Professor D. G. James, *Scepticism and Poetry*.

² *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. XIII.

and again from 9th November to 13th December, 1796. In the *True Intellectual System* Coleridge would have met with a theory of perception very much like Kant's.

Ralph Cudworth, Master of Christ's, was one of the group of philosophers known as the Cambridge Platonists. The contributions of this group to philosophy are contained in the large and academic folios so dear to the seventeenth century divine and have consequently never received the recognition they deserve. In our own day J. H. Muirhead¹ and A. O. Lovejoy² have both paid tribute to the profundity of Cudworth's philosophy and in particular the way in which his theory of knowledge anticipated the writings of nineteenth century idealism. In many ways the Latitude-men, as they are sometimes called, were attempting the same task as Coleridge himself. Instead of the materialism of Hartley they were fighting the materialism of Hobbes, a much more influential and, indeed, dangerous figure to the late seventeenth century than Hartley to a later generation. It is interesting to find that immediately before borrowing Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*, Coleridge had taken from the Bristol Library a volume of Bishop Burnet's *History of my Own Times*. Burnet's History contains an interesting account of the struggle made by the Cambridge men against the sinister influences of Hobbes. The church in the reign of Charles II was so lax and so intellectually undisciplined, Burnet tells us, that "... if a new sect of men had not appeared of another stamp, the church had quite lost her esteem over the nation. These were generally of Cambridge, formed under some divines, the chief of whom were Drs. Whitchcot, Cudworth, Wilkins, More and Worthington." There can be little doubt that it was through reading Burnet that Coleridge came to study Cudworth.

Cudworth, in answering the radical empiricism of Hobbes, did not appeal, as many of his predecessors, to innate ideas to account for the knowledge that is independent of sense perception. He asserts that the mind has a creative function in knowledge. He takes, amongst other examples, the case of a white triangle and shows that the sense-data included in our perception of it do not account for the perception itself. The qualities such as whiteness and triangularity are not just given by the senses. We recognize them as belonging to other objects and for knowledge even to be possible the mind must possess the power of

¹ J. H. Muirhead, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy*.

² A. O. Lovejoy, *Kant and the English Platonists in Essays in Honour of William James*.

forming concepts such as whiteness and triangularity. In perceiving a particular white triangle the mind makes an act of judgment which brings the particular sense-data together and recognizes them as belonging to an object. His whole theory, which makes sense perception depend upon the higher cognitive processes such as concept forming, is one which anticipates to a remarkable extent the analysis made by Kant.

There is more in Coleridge's account of the imagination, however, than a theory of perception. He first of all distinguishes the fancy and the imagination. The fancy, according to him, is the faculty which produces compound images. It simply constructs new arrangements of past sense experience and its products are purely the result of an associative and not a creative process. The imagination on the other hand, as we have seen, is a creative force. But there are two kinds of imagination. First of all, there is the "primary imagination," which acting upon the raw material of sensation, enables us to have perception. Coleridge then makes a further distinction and describes what he calls the "secondary imagination." It is this which is concerned with poetry. It is like the "primary imagination" in kind and differs only in degree and in the mode of its operation. This difference would seem to mean that it acts in accordance with the will. The "primary imagination" is involuntary; we perceive whether we wish to, or not. The "secondary imagination" can be held in check or allowed to operate in accordance with our wishes. It is free in a way that ordinary perception cannot be. The remainder of Coleridge's brief account proceeds to tell us that the "secondary imagination" "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create." By this he appears to imply that the perceptions, which have already been created out of sense-data, must be broken down again into their original form, before the constructive work of the "secondary imagination" can begin. When this has been done it proceeds to create objects which, like the objects of perception, are not conceptual, but concrete and particular. This account of the poetic imagination is similar to, though less precise and detailed than that formulated by Kant. The question is, how did Coleridge come to elaborate it? We have seen that Cudworth held that the mind is creative in perception and that there must exist a mental power akin to Coleridge's "primary imagination." Cudworth, however, is not interested in the philosophy of art and does not apply his theory to any consideration of poetry. Nevertheless, there are indications that it was to Cudworth and the philosophical tradition which he represents that Coleridge was indebted for the basis of his aesthetics.

Coleridge's battle against the influence of Hartley was to a certain

extent a continuation of the one waged a century earlier by the Cambridge Platonists against the influence of Hobbes. He abandoned Hartley, not only because associationism tried to turn the human mind into a machine, but because it was based on a philosophy which tried to turn the whole universe into a machine. Similarly, a century before, the Cambridge men had struggled to refute those philosophers who had a "tang of the mechanic Atheism, hanging about them" and who admitted "no other causes of things as philosophical, save the material and mechanical only; this being really to banish all mental, and consequently divine causality, quite out of the world; and to make the whole world to be nothing else but a mere heap of dust, fortuitously agitated."¹

If Hobbes and Hartley were true then poetry was reduced to elegant trifling and the poet could, at best, only take over the truths of science and decorate them with the fanciful trappings of verse.

Cudworth and his fellows challenged the Hobbesian philosophy by drawing attention to natural phenomena, such as biological and vegetable growth, which could not be explained by mechanism. To account for such phenomena the Cambridge Platonists adumbrated the doctrine of an organic principle which was held to animate nature. The doctrine was a development of the neo-Platonic belief in an *anima mundi* and was held, in some form or other, by most of the group. It received its profoundest treatment from Cudworth, who developed from it a theory not unlike nineteenth-century emergent evolution. He assigns the name "plastic nature" to this principle of growth which struggles to produce new forms of life from the material world. According to Cudworth, this "plastic, unconscious nature" is the life-force responsible for all natural growth which cannot be explained by "the power of fortuitous mechanism."

The picture of the world which the seventeenth century scientific way of thought had made the generally accepted one, was that of a machine working to the laws of motion. This picture had been built up by analogy from the pre-occupation of science with mechanical invention. In a century whose thinking was so much concerned with pulleys, levers, telescopes and navigational instruments, it was natural, not only that the imagery of the smart young poets should reflect this interest, but that philosophy itself should be coloured by it. The relationship between God and this world became increasingly the relation between the engineer and his machine; the relation between Paley's clock-maker and his clock.

¹ Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, ed. Harrison, I, 217.

Although this became the dominant one, there were, however, other and older ways of imagining the relationship. The picture of the world which haunts the writings of the Latitude-men, is not of the world as a machine, but of the world as a work of art. Such a picture owes more to neo-Platonism than to Platonism proper and derived from the works of such writers as Plotinus and Proclus. It is a view one would expect to be congenial to the poetic mind and, indeed, it was frequently expressed in poetry before the rising tide of mechanism engulfed the poetic consciousness. The world of nature, according to this belief, is not a dead world made up of immutable, material atoms, organised according to mechanical laws. It is a world of symbols, shadows of that transcendental reality which lies beyond appearances. Nature is a second book of Scriptures and a revelation of God.

“The means, therefore, which unto us is lent
Him to behold, is on His works to look,
Which he hath made in beauty excellent.”¹

Milton's Raphael, in addressing Adam, advances the same doctrine.

“... though what if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein
Each to other like more than on Earth is thought?”

It is significant that Coleridge's early reading included Plotinus, Proclus and Gemistius Pletho; and the mystics, such as George Fox, Jacob Boehme and William Law, were, what he calls, a pillar of fire in the dark night of the soul, which fell upon him after studying Hartley. The magnitude of his debt to neo-Platonism has never been properly estimated, but there can be no doubt that it was a formative influence upon his philosophy. Coleridge certainly accepted the neo-Platonic belief in the natural world as symbolic of the transcendental. As early as 1797 he gave it poetic utterance in the *Destiny of Nations* and he seems at this time to have been under the influence of the Platonic philosophy.

“All that meets the bodily sense I deem
Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
To infant minds; and we in this low world
Placed with our backs to bright reality,
That we might learn with young, unwounded ken
The substance from the shadow.”

¹ Spenser, *Hymn of Heavenly Beauty*.

This was no vague Pantheism, for he constantly speaks of the dangers of mystical thought in this direction. Natural objects are symbols of the Divine Ideas and the transcendental, at its highest, is to be found in the consciousness of God. That this was no passing phase with him is shewn by our meeting with the same attitude in the *Statesman's Manual*, written in 1816. After speaking of the Old Testament as poetry, he continues in the notes:

Let it not weary you if I digress for a few moments to another book, likewise a revelation of God—the great book of his servant Nature. That in its obvious sense and literal interpretation it declares the being and attributes of the Almighty Father, none but the *fool in heart* has ever dared gainsay. But it has been the music of gentle and pious minds in all ages, it is the *poetry* of all human nature, to read it likewise in a figurative sense, and to find therein correspondencies and symbols of the spiritual world.

There is abundant evidence for saying that by 1797, the year before he left for Germany, Coleridge was well acquainted with the writings of neo-Platonism and with the Platonic tradition in English philosophy as represented by a writer such as Cudworth. It was in the previous year, 1796, that Coleridge first began to consider the nature of the poetic imagination. He tells us in the *Biographia Literaria*, that it was in his twenty-fourth year, after listening to a recitation of a manuscript poem of Wordsworth's, that he commenced those "repeated meditations" which led him to distinguish the fancy from the imagination. If he had not read Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*, Coleridge might have elaborated a neo-Platonic aesthetics which regarded beauty as the expression of mind through the medium of matter, but he would not have reached a conception of the imagination as truly creative. A good deal of his philosophy of art is neo-Platonic, but its characteristic features owe something to the English Platonism of the seventeenth century and, in particular, to Cudworth's doctrine of a "plastic nature."

Neo-Platonism had taught that the natural order came into being by the impress of the Divine Mind on unformed matter. Natural phenomena are symbols, in a changing world, of the ideal, which is eternal and changeless. The Divine Ideas are not patterns in the sense that natural objects are direct copies of them, but have a perfection which lies beyond being. The symbols are always inadequate symbols of a greater glory than they themselves can contain. In the fallen world of Christian belief, the symbols necessarily can only imperfectly reflect this transcendental glory. Cudworth modified this belief by his introduction of a plastic

principle at work in nature. The impress of the Divine Mind upon matter is not like the impress of a seal on wax, for nature to him was something organic and evolving. The Divine Mind does not stamp Itself upon matter in one fixed and determinate act, but works through the agency of a plastic power which brings new forms into being by a process of growth. John Norris, another member of the Cambridge group, in his *A Divine Hymn on the Creation*, describes how God created first an inchoate mass:

“First matter came undress’d, She made such haste t’obey.”

Then, by the operation of the plastic power at work in matter, the whole process of creation begins:

“But soon a plastik spirit did ferment
The liquid dusky element.
The mass harmoniously begins to move,
‘Let there be light,’ said God! ’twas said and done,
The mass dipt through with brightness, shone.”

If we substitute the poet for God in this account of creation, we shall see that it gives us at once a theory of the poetic imagination quite different from the associationist one. Poetic composition is seen to be a creative process in which the poet expresses his thought by impressing it on the raw and unformed material of sensation. The poet’s thought is not stamped on this material as a seal on wax, but is realised in particular embodiments by a process of growth. Corresponding to the plastic principle in nature there is a power of the mind which operates on the raw stuff of the poet’s consciousness and creates from it new forms. The plastic principle has its analogue in the poet’s mind in the imagination, which acting as an instrument of thought, gives it body and shape. It is not that the poet’s thought is conceived and then clothed in poetic language, but the thought is realised and comes to birth in the poetic imagery.

That some such analogical process of thinking led Coleridge to his belief about the nature of the imagination seems certain. It is significant, for instance, that he calls the imagination the “esemplastic,” or plastic power. More important, however, are his repeated comparisons of the poetic imagination with the divine act of creation. In the famous passage in Chapter XIII of the *Biographia Literaria*, he says that it is “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.”

In a letter to his friend, Richard Sharp, in January, 1804, he calls it "a dim analogue of creation," and again, in the letter to Thomas Poole, already quoted, he says that the human mind is made in "the *Image of the Creator*." Moreover, Coleridge's view of poetic imagery as symbolical of thought follows directly from this analogy between God and the poet. It regards poetic imagery very much as the natural world was regarded by that tradition of Christian theology which was influenced by Platonism; by that theology, in fact, to be found in the divines of the seventeenth century whom Coleridge knew so well.

Christian Platonism believed that in contemplating nature we see something of God Himself. The whole natural world is an expression of God's thought, though only a partial and imperfect expression. Natural objects are symbols and not merely copies (if imperfect copies) of the Divine Ideas. They are not meant to be interpreted literally. We can attempt to convey their meaning in logical language and, to some extent, we can go behind the symbols and express what they mean, but the attempt will never be wholly satisfactory. Even theology itself cannot translate accurately their meaning into determinate language. At best it can only attempt to describe what cannot be expressed in logical terms, for the symbols convey their own meaning. In looking at nature we are made aware of God's thought in the same way that in looking at a work of art we are made aware of the artist's.

As natural objects are symbols of God's thought so is poetic imagery the symbol of the poet's. In saying that the poet uses symbols we do not mean merely that he expresses himself in the arbitrary signs of conventional terminology. A large part of language consists, of course, in assigning labels to things, but poetic symbolism is something quite different from this. A poet's thought is such that it is most exactly expressed in the symbolism of his imagery and it is impossible for the reader to become acquainted with the thought in any more direct way. It is sometimes possible to go behind the symbols and to perceive what is being symbolised, but this is not a substitute for the symbols and knowledge of this kind is less and not more exact than that gained by means of the symbols. It is possible for instance to go behind the symbolism of the following lines and to express something of their meaning in logical language:

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an appletree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit.

The attempt to explicate the imagery in conceptual terms does not give us their "meaning," however, for the poet's thought is not to be equated with the prose statements of critical analysis.

On the other hand, unless the symbols are to become entirely meaningless, the human mind must attempt to translate them. Although a poet's imagery may contain more than can ever be comprehended in a series of conceptual statements, yet the task of interpretation must be undertaken. We know at the outset that the task will never be wholly and successfully accomplished, for there is no exact, logical counterpart of a poetic image. For this reason all poetic imagery is ambiguous. For this reason the poet is always in search of an exact image and always doomed to failure in his search; always attempting, in the phrase of a contemporary poet, "a raid on the inarticulate" and never satisfied with his spoils. There is no substitute for poetry; no other way of communicating the thought that the poet wishes to communicate. Coleridge, himself, went so far as to say that

"An IDEA in the *highest* sense of the word cannot be conveyed but by a symbol.¹

For Coleridge the poetic imagination is the faculty which expresses thought by means of symbols. As members of the natural order, the products of the plastic power, are all particular creatures (although, indeed, they can be classified and grouped together for various practical and theoretical purposes), so the products of the poetic imagination are characterized by their particularity. As every man and every tree is a particular and unique man, or tree, (although each will belong to the general class of men, or trees) so every poetic image has particularity. Coleridge never tires of pointing out the difference between the conceptualised abstractions of the understanding and the particularity of the symbols by which the reason is imaginatively expressed. In the *Statesman's Manual* he contrasts the imaginative historical writing of the Old Testament and the lifeless abstractions of modern histories.

The histories and political economy of the present and preceding century partake in the general contagion of its mechanistic philosophy, and are the *product* of an unenlivened generalizing Understanding. In the Scriptures they are the living *educts* of the Imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense . . . gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*.

¹ *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. IX.

The figures of Old Testament history are individual men and women and not allegorical mouthpieces. Yet, in and through these individuals, we perceive universal truths. Unlike the histories of his own day, Coleridge says that the Bible provides both "Portraits and Ideals."

The truths and the symbols that represent them move in conjunction and form the living chariot that bears up (for *us*) the throne of the Divine Humanity.

The linking of the poetic imagination with the reason as a faculty distinct from the understanding, in this passage, raises a further question. Coleridge's distinction between the fancy and the imagination undoubtedly forms part of the larger distinction he makes between the understanding and the reason. In spite of the evidence to the contrary, it has often been maintained that here at any rate he was indebted to Kant. Certainly a distinction between the two faculties is made by Kant and in this and other respects their theories are alike.

Kant distinguishes three kinds of imagination. Firstly, there is the reproductive imagination which corresponds closely to Coleridge's fancy. Its operations are not free for it can only reproduce amalgamations of elements which have already been present to the human mind. Secondly, there is the productive imagination, which is parallel to Coleridge's "primary imagination." As its name implies, this is really productive, but again is not free in its operations, for it is governed by the understanding. It enables the mind to create perceptions from the raw material of sense-data and by bringing sensation and understanding together enables the latter to carry on its work of discursive reasoning. Lastly, for Kant, there is the aesthetic imagination which is both productive and also free, that is, independent (at least to some extent) of the laws of the understanding. It is not absolutely free, according to Kant, but is related in an indeterminate way to the understanding.

To understand this account of Kant's, it is necessary to say something more of what he means by the understanding and how it differs from the reason. The understanding, for Kant, is the faculty which makes concepts. It is the discursive faculty and corresponds to what we should call the reasoning power. Above this is the reason which is concerned, not with the making of concepts, but with giving the mind what Kant calls, "Ideas." These are regulative principles, that is, principles which are above sensory knowledge and not empirically verifiable. They themselves order and explain experience and are not explained by it. They are not scientific truths which can be tested and proved by scientific

means, but truths which have to be accepted if experience is to make sense at all. Science itself has to proceed from such presuppositions, which themselves are not susceptible of scientific proof. Kant says that there are two sorts of Ideas: rational and aesthetic Ideas. Rational Ideas are what he describes as "transcendent concepts." These differ from the concepts formed by the understanding, in that they cannot be verified by experience. Aesthetic Ideas are similar to rational Ideas and yet there is an important difference.

"But, by an aesthetic idea," he writes, "I mean that representation of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e. *concept*, being adequate to it, and which language, consequently, can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible."¹

An aesthetic Idea, in other words, is like a rational Idea in going beyond and regulating experience, but differs from it in not being a concept. No concept is adequate to express the content of an aesthetic Idea. The aesthetic Idea is a representation of the imagination which seeks to pass beyond the bounds of experience. The mind will endeavour to embody this representation in a concept, or concepts, but the task is doomed to failure. No concept, or set of concepts, can adequately express the fullness of an aesthetic Idea.

This implies that there can be in thought much that cannot be expressed in precise language. What Kant means by saying that the imagination is related to the understanding in an indeterminate way now becomes clear. The content of the imagination, not being exhausted by any definite concept, provides "a wealth of undeveloped material for the understanding, to which the latter paid no regard in its concept." The understanding uses this wealth of material to extend its own scope, to widen its own boundaries of knowledge. That is why the imagination has a place in all sorts of thinking and belongs to the statesman, the lawyer and the scientist as well as the artist. A good deal of their thinking, however, is guided by rational Ideas which are conceptual, whereas the artist is one whose thought is embodied in the concrete images provided by the aesthetic imagination. The aesthetic imagination, for Kant, is the faculty which provides the mind with aesthetic Ideas. It is truly creative and free. While it is indeterminately linked to the understanding and must endeavour to find concepts which, at any rate, will

¹ *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Meredith, Oxford, 1911, pp. 175-6.

approximate to its thought, it goes beyond this and serves, not the understanding, but the reason.

The similarity of Kant's and Coleridge's accounts is very striking. Kant's is, of course, a profound analysis which forms part of an all-embracing philosophy, while Coleridge's is no more than a hint of that more systematic treatment which he promised us, but, characteristically, never accomplished. There is no doubt that Kant confirmed and made more explicit what Coleridge had already worked out for himself. This should not lead us, however, to underestimate Coleridge's originality. The suggestion, for instance, that he derived the distinction between the reason and the understanding from German philosophy is not borne out by the facts. Coleridge certainly regards the imagination as the agent of the reason, and, in doing so, is clearly conscious that the reason is not the same as the understanding. Reason, for Coleridge, is not a ratiocinative process. It arrives at the truth by direct awareness and not by argument. There is no need, however, to go to Kant for justification of such a position. Coleridge reminds us that a distinction between the reason and the understanding had been drawn by the philosophers of the seventeenth century and quotes Milton to illustrate his point.

Lastly, I have cautiously discriminated the terms, the reason, and the understanding, encouraged and confirmed by the authority of our genuine divines and philosophers, before the Revolution:

'both life, and sense,
Fancy and *understanding*; whence the soul
Reason receives, and REASON is her *being*,
DISCURSIVE or INTUITIVE: discourse
Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours,
Differing but in *degree*, in *kind* the same.¹

If Kant confirmed and extended what Coleridge learned from the Cambridge Platonists, it is equally clear that Coleridge believed in a power of the mind above that of the discursive understanding before he went to Germany. His reading of the mystics gave him, at an early age, a "working presentiment, that all the products of the mere *reflective* faculty partook of DEATH", while his knowledge of Plato and the English Platonists would have been sufficient to convince him that reason is "the source and substance of truths above sense, having their evidence in themselves." There are indications in later writings, such as *Aids to*

¹ *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. X. The quotation is from *Paradise Lost*, V, 485 where Raphael is addressing Adam.

Reflexion and the *Statesman's Manual*, that he came to develop this distinction between the reason and the understanding, into the more detailed one which formed part of Kant's account of how it is possible for the human mind to have knowledge. Nevertheless, although Coleridge never formulated his own, talked-of, theory of knowledge, there are passages in his works which show that, in spite of this indebtedness, his view of the reason remained in some respects different from Kant's. These differences are the result of the Platonism which had been his earlier inspiration. Reason, for Kant, although it went beyond the understanding, could never reach more than phenomenal knowledge. This was something which always separated Coleridge from Kant and drove him to investigate the abstruse, post-Kantian aesthetics of Fichte and Schelling. Coleridge believed that the human reason could make the jump between the temporal and the transcendental and could come to know things-in-themselves. He even believed that Kant, in spite of his protestations, shared this conviction.

"In spite therefore of his own declarations, I could never believe, that it was possible for him to have meant no more by his *Noumenon*, or THING IN ITSELF, than his mere words express; or that in his own conception he confined the whole *plastic* power to the forms of the intellect, leaving for the external cause, for the *materiale* of our sensations, a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable."¹

Coleridge did not think that the reason approaches things-in-themselves by direct awareness. It works through the symbolism of the world, which itself is only known through the creativity of our minds. The imagination which acts in the human mind is a shadow of the Divine Imagination, or plastic power, which operates in the natural world. When natural objects are caught up by its transmuting influence they cease to be just objects and become the symbols of an awareness which goes beyond both the understanding and the Kantian reason. This creative process, however, is not merely subjective, for nature is not only a collection of fixed and dead objects, but also a living force and there exists a "bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man."² It is this view which Coleridge develops in the essay *On Poesy or Art*, where he expresses his mature conviction that poetry, in representing thought by means of symbols, imitates

¹ *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. IX.

² *On Poesy or Art*. This essay forms part of the *Literary Remains* and its date is probably 1818-19, or later.

that which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols—the *Natur geist*, or spirit of nature.

The symbolism of art and the symbolism of nature are the same thing.

As soon as the human mind is intelligibly addressed by an outward image exclusively of articulate speech, so soon does art commence In this sense nature itself is to a religious observer the art of God; and for the same cause art itself might be defined as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or, . . . the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. It is the figured language of thought. . . . Hence nature itself would give us the impression of a work of art, if we could see the thought which is present at once in the whole and in every part.

Mrs. H. N. Coleridge, in an Appendix to her edition of *Notes and Lectures* (1849), points out the resemblance here to Schelling's thought, but this conception of art need have owed nothing to Schelling. Fundamentally it is the one which Coleridge had already arrived at in his early years and is based on the belief about God's relation to His creation which the English Platonists had taught him.

This Volume Contains

HIT OR MISS:

The Confessions of a Pedagogue

By Hugh Lyon, late Headmaster of Rugby

BEN JONSON AND THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

By L. J. Potts

THE CHARACTER AND PRIVATE LIFE OF EDMUND BURKE

By Sir Philip Magnus, Bt.

THE PROSE OF E. R. EDDISON

By G. Rostrevor Hamilton

PALGRAVE'S "GOLDEN TREASURY"

By Colin J. Horne

YOU MIGHT HAVE RIMED

By E. H. W. Meyerstein

COLERIDGE'S THEORY OF THE IMAGINATION

By R. L. Brett